THE

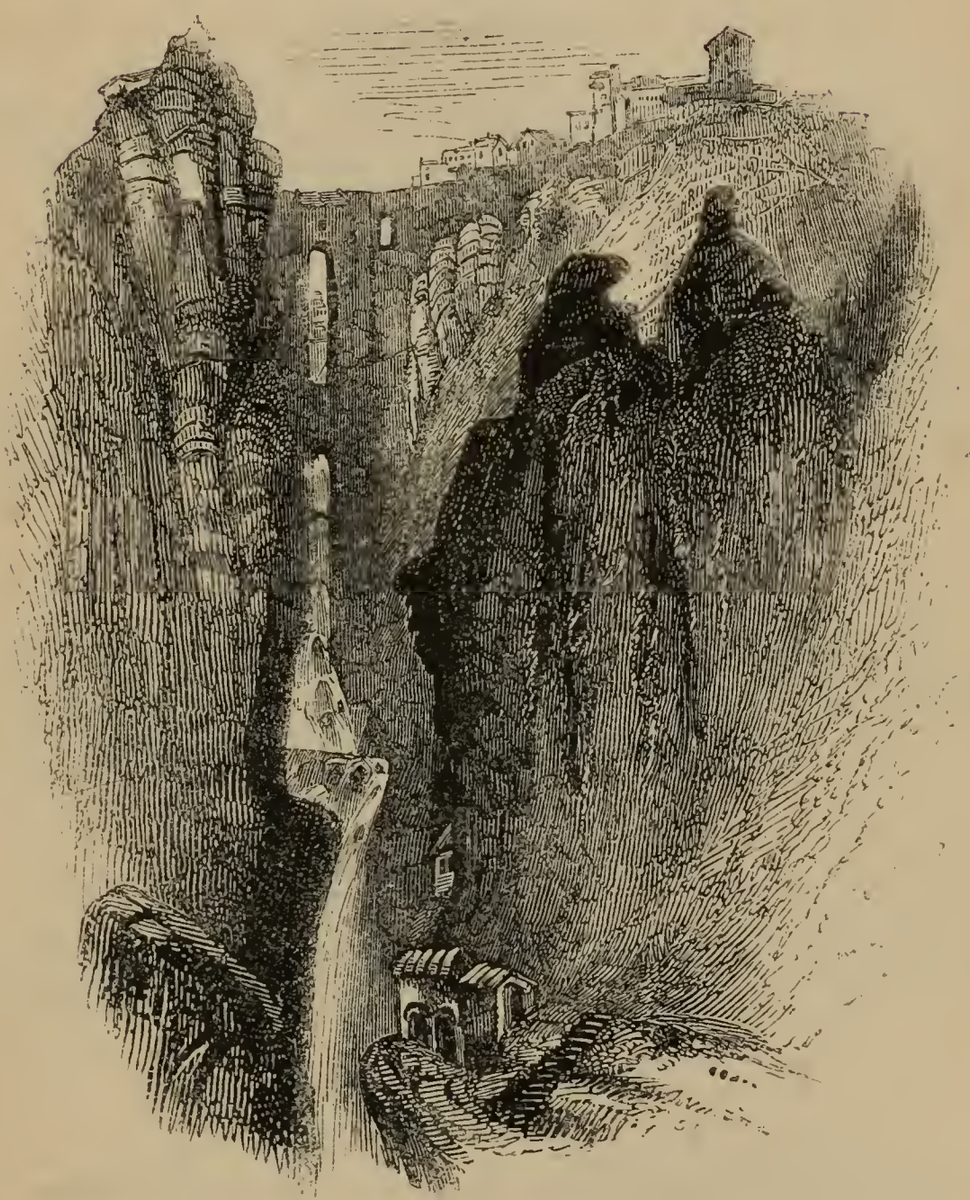
WAYSIDE CROSS;

OR,

THE RAID OF GOMEZ,

A TALE OF THE CARLIST WAR.

BY CAPTAIN E. A. MILMAN, 33RD REGT.



LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1847.

London : Printed by W. Clowes and Sons, Stamford Street.

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THE

WAYSIDE CROSS,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

The Introduction—The Wayside Cross—The Bull-fight at Ronda—The Stranger—The Miller and the Maiden.

I WAS travelling in the south of Spain. It was in the month of June, and the sun shone with a fierce intensity on the steep and rugged sierra over which the dangerous and nearly impracticable track held its serpentine course. Nothing can be more tiresome and monotonous than the scenery of most of the mountain roads in Spain which it has been my lot to traverse; nothing can be more oppressive than the continual glare and the almost impalpable dust which rises in clouds from the loose soil, filling the hair, ears, and eyes, and parching the mouth and throat to such a degree that every dirty pool and every horse-trough, swarming with queer-looking animals, are welcome as the flowers in May.

My guide—a little merry, swarthy, chattering Andalusian, perched on the top of the baggage on a large raw-boned steed, looked like a monkey on a camel, and was for ever drawling out, as we trudged slowly on, some national song, except when he paused to light his cigarillo, or to abuse his charger for stumbling. Pepito was quite a character in his way.

Many a dreary mile we went on at a foot's pace without anything to break the monotony and stillness of the scene, except that ever and anon a huge vulture would rise slowly and languidly, as if disquieted at being disturbed, and apparently oppressed with the heat of the glaring sun; then floating majestically over some dark ravine, would settle on a projecting rock and appear to watch us with a lazy curiosity. The track at length

became rather nervous even to those accustomed to mountain travelling, for it wound round the side of a deep valley with a steep and broken hill above and a nearly precipitous descent below, whilst in the hollow a mountain torrent had forced its way amidst the uncouth rocks; at this season of the year the bed was nearly dry, though a few shallow pools here and there glistened like silver in the sunshine, and marked its course. The scenery was dreary: not a bush, not a shrub was to be seen; only here and there a shrivelled and stunted palmetto relieved the fierce reflection from the sterile soil; the earth, cracked by the parching heat in many places, emitted a hollow sound as our horses passed slowly over it; rock upon rock, pinnacled, wild and strange, rose on every side. As we entered a gloomy-looking pass we came upon a small pile of stones, surmounted by a wooden cross. "Ho! here is something," I said, or rather attempted to say; for, until I had swallowed a drop of wine from the bota swung at my saddle, I could not utter a word; a solitary aloe in blossom threw a doubtful and scanty shadow over the spot, the feathered tresses of the graceful flower contrasting beautifully with the sterility which surrounded it.

"Look, Señor!" suddenly cried Pepito, with an energy I did not think him capable of, crossing himself fervently all the time; "do you see that dark stain on the ground?"

I looked; and certainly, at the foot of the cross, on the white soil of the path, appeared a broad, dark, and nearly circular stain, as of blood lately spilt.

"Look, Señor!" he exclaimed again, "that is the blood of a human being; many a time I have passed by this cross, and there, there that accursed spot still is. The rain from heaven will not wash it out, the earth will not hide the horrid deed; often have I seen my mules snort and start aside, as if they saw something I could not see, when they came to this spot."

"Hola! Pepe, what is all this?" I said, interrupting him; "there must be some strange history connected with this cross; surely there are plenty of murder-crosses on the wayside, of which you never take any notice?"

"Es verdad," he replied, with a shudder, again crossing himself as quick as lightning; "but, Señor, this was no common murder."

"Well, Pepe, tell me the story, if you know it:" then giving him a good cigar (the greatest treat possible to a Spaniard), to put him into good humour, he related to me the outline of the following tale, which served to while away the time until we arrived at the gates of Ronda.

"The bull-ring in the old and picturesque town of Ronda was densely crowded: three bulls had already fallen beneath the unerring sword of the celebrated Montes; the fourth now entered; every eye was bent on him as suddenly he rushed into the arena, a dark red dun, with legs and muzzle black as Erebus.

"One moment he pauses, as if bewildered; the nearest horseman attracts his eye; in vain the gallant Pinto, the first Picador in Spain, exerts his sinewy strength and matchless skill against the charge of this champion of the plains; so furious is his onset that horse and man roll over together amidst a cloud of dust; another and another share the same fate; the Chulos dare not approach, so wild and rapid are his attacks.

"Three times did this gallant bull clear the ring before the trumpet sounded for the Matador to appear. Montes has strained his wrist. The Primera Espada is to try his prowess with the redoubtable leader of the herd.

"One onset, and one only, did he sustain; so wicked was the charge, that though he escaped with a slight scratch, he dared no longer face so furious an enemy, but vaulted out of the ring, and no persuasion, or remonstrance, or sense of shame, could again induce him to enter it.

"The second Matador vowed that he would soon dispose of this troublesome customer. Vain boast! See, he turns and runs away—O, shame on a Matador!—amidst the hoots and yells of the tumultuous assembly, for so it had now become. The excitement is fearful to behold; in vain the people call upon the Matadors to come forward; none are found hardy enough to encounter so unequal an enemy.

"Suddenly a man, young, handsome, and splendidly dressed in the Majo costume, jumped into the outer circle of the arena, and, taking off his hat, asked permission of the Alcalde to try his courage and skill against this savage and implacable foe.

"His tall and graceful figure, unassuming manner, and manly daring, made an immediate impression on the crowd.

"In vain did the magnates try to dissuade him from making the attempt; he would take no denial. At length they yielded. Snatching a cloak and sword belonging to the unsuccessful Matador, with one bound he cleared the inner barrier, felt the point of his weapon, and quietly waited until the bull should see him.

"At this moment not a sound could be heard in all that dense throng, save the deep-drawn breath of intense anxiety.

"Suddenly the bull perceived his new antagonist. On, on he came, with a rapidity and savage force that threatened at once to annihilate the stranger. A thrilling shudder passed over the crowd. Still, all was silent as the grave, save where one low heart-rending scream might have been heard; but the minds of the people were so wrapt up in the approaching contest that no one seemed to heed it. They are now front to front, human skill and courage opposed to brute force; how unequal seemed the fight!

"Gracefully waving his bright red cloak to attract the monster's eye, the stranger firmly awaited the attack, and well and nobly did he sustain his boast. Suffering the bull to make his first assay, he did not attempt to use his sword, but suddenly drawing the cloak aside and throwing it over his shoulder, he allowed the bull to pass by in his headlong career.

"Again the monster faces him, and he this time, holding the cloak out before him with his left arm, whilst he grasped his keen and well-tempered sword in his right hand, permitted the bull to charge straight at him: they meet; a cloud of dust obscures them for a moment; it clears: there stands the stranger, erect and unscathed; the bull is rolling over in his death-agony, the trenchant point had severed the spine. So rapidly, so beautifully was it executed, that the eye could scarcely follow it.

"Tumultuous vivas greet the conqueror as, bowing to the authorities, he returned the cloak and sword. A fair cheek that a moment past had been deadly pale, now crimsoned like a damask rose; a pair of jet black eyes, just now obscured with tears, now sparkled like lustrous diamonds. Their glances have met the stranger's, as quietly he withdrew among the crowd; it was enough—the stranger was repaid.

"'Who is he?' was whispered around: no one seemed to

know; and curiosity was soon lost or deadened for a time, for another bull bounded into the circle.

"'Ha! how is this?' muttered a swarthy but at the same time handsome Andalusian, whose frowning brow showed that he was ill-pleased at some occurrence. 'Ha! how is this? Does, can Frascita know this stranger?'—and he stole a look at one of the loveliest black-eyed beauties of the sierras who was sitting beside him—'She does, she must; or why those tears—that scream? Our Andalusian girls are not wont to weep at a bull-fight. Ha, let him beware how he crosses my path!' and he knit his brows, and clenched his teeth, till he looked like a fiend.

"At this moment some one touched him on the shoulder. Mateo started, and for a moment thought that he had spoken aloud; turning round, he saw the stranger close behind him, in company with a well-known character, Lope de la Vega el Contrabandista, the only human being, perhaps, that the bold miller stood in the least awe of.

"Daring, successful, clever, and wealthy, and although engaged in the same illicit pursuits, yet honourable to a degree in everything unconnected with smuggling, Lope had contrived to gain an ascendancy over the fierce and turbulent being before him, whose ferocious disposition led him to commit acts that placed him in the power of his more talented and perhaps more cunning coadjutor.

"'This is he of whom I spoke to you before,' whispered Lope to the miller: 'meet us at nine to-morrow evening, at the Venta de las dos Bocas; Padre Tomas will be there.' 'I will,' briefly responded Mateo, and the two passed on.

"The miller then turning to the lovely maiden by his side, made some observations to her in a low tone. 'Señorita,' at last said he, in a husky though not unkind voice, and as if he wished to be contradicted, 'you know this stranger?' 'Yes,' replied Frascita, hurriedly, 'I have seen him before.' 'Where, and when? Where, and when?' the miller whispered, in a tone so calm, and yet so deadly fierce, that it entered into her very soul; 'where have you met this gallant? Beware!'

"The bright blood flushed her clear olive cheeks as she replied, her voice kindling with all the fierté of an Andalusian beauty, 'I will not tell! What right have you to question me? Dare

you, dare any man address me in such a manner, I would spurn him from me. Begone!' Then drawing her mantilla close over her face, she turned away.

"Gnashing his teeth with very rage, Mateo quitted her side, and stalked savagely out of the bull-ring."

But where, and when, and under what circumstances had Frascita met the stranger?—that must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

The Valle Segreda—The Attack and Burning of the Diligence—The Fonda de la Diligencia at Cordova—The Old Carlist and the Little Pepita—The Arriero.

THE road from Jaen to Cordova passes through a narrow defile, on the sides of which, rugged and rocky as they are, grow stunted cork and olive trees, springing from the crevices of the rocks wherever any soil washed from the higher ground has been deposited; on the crests of the ravine, on each side, a cover of fern and underwood, composed of wild myrtle, cistus, and dwarf ilex trees, extends for miles high enough to screen an army. From its proximity to the sierras, and the peculiar facilities afforded for concealment, this spot was at one time notorious for the many and daring robberies committed there; and many a frightened traveller has crossed himself in passing through the Valle Segreda.

At this time, however, early in the autumn of 1836, although there might be some dangers anticipated from straggling parties of Facciosos, or even the Queen's partisans, the spot was considered tolerably safe from brigands, as parties of the Queen's lancers had for the last week scoured the country, and had succeeded in capturing several notorious ladrones.

The Carlists, it was supposed, had not ventured in force into that vicinity; the diligence, therefore, set out from Jaen with a smaller escort than usual, drawn by ten mules tricked out in tawdry finery, with huge collars jolting on their scraggy necks. See, here it comes lumbering along; six lancers preceding it at a trot, with their red breeches, blue coats, square caps, and lance-heads gleaming in the sun, holsters on their saddle-bows, swords clattering by their sides; in fact, looking altogether as warlike as needs be.

In the fore part, or coupé, of this extraordinary vehicle, there were three individuals. One, a middle-aged Andalusian dame,

black haired, black eyed, and still handsome in face and features, although her form had lost in fat all the grace peculiar to the sweet south—she was asleep; not so her companion, who, with her mantilla thrown back so as to disclose the whole of her expressive and lovely countenance, was listening intensely to a third person; he, from his flashing eye and animated gestures, was probably recounting some daring adventure. In the maiden's jet black, lustrous eyes, the Moorish blood showed forth; her clear complexion, fairer and more blooming than that of the daughters of the plain, proclaimed her the child of the sierras; the dark though auburn hair, the small dimpled mouth, the pearly teeth, the chiselled features, more than all, the slender figure full of grace, the tiny hands, and the fairy-like feet which peeped from beneath her black silk petticoat, could not be mistaken; for none have these qualities in such perfection as the Andalusian maid of the mountains.

Women such as these, young, beautiful, and of an ardent disposition, are readily attracted, and even fascinated, by the relation of feats of daring; and if the narrator be in the pride of his days, attractive in his manners, and handsome in his person, let the maid of the south beware. Love kindles more quickly under that genial clime, than in our more frigid and formal country. Deeply interested, Frascita (for it was she) listened with lips apart and deep-drawn breath to the animated tale of the stranger. Occasionally her brilliant eyes were lighted up with even an unwonted fire; they would encounter his. Why does she withdraw them so hurriedly, and with such pretty confusion? She knows not why, but she feels that her cheeks are blushing before the admiring gaze of her handsome companion.

Charming preludes of love—who can analyze those feelings, when first the maiden begins to discover that there is one man, and one only, in the wide, wide world, far, far above the rest? The good Tia Dolores slept on, perfectly unconscious of the havoc that the glances of those four bright eyes were already making; little did she dream, if she dreamed at all, of the mischief of going to sleep, good-natured soul! leaving a young and eminently good-looking man, although a stranger, to entertain her susceptible and lovely niece, and that, too, completely with-

out restraint, for she gave full evidence that she was really asleep. As I said before, love in this warm and genial climate springs up like the growth of its own flowers: no wonder, then, that a feeling nearly akin to love had already begun to bud in their bosoms; already the conversation had become more tender and more interesting; already they knew each other's name.

But hark! What is that?

A hissing, ringing sound whistles by, followed by a loud report that echoes through the wild ravine. Another and another follows in rapid succession: the postilions drop from their saddles; the lancers spur their startled horses, and gallop off in confusion by the way they had come, amidst a shower of bullets: the cover is alive with men. From behind every bush, every cork tree, every olive, every rock, they rush with wild cries: some run to seize the mules, others cut the traces. Tia Dolores starts from her sleep, screaming with fear. "Ha! we are attacked," cries the stranger, clasping Frascita to him, and placing his body between her and the firing: she turns pale and trembles like a leaf, but does not strive to elude his embrace. Glancing out of the window, the stranger sees the flat red caps of the Chapelgorris; in a moment he reassures his trembling fair one, whispering in her ear, "Hush, my beloved, fear not; they are my own men." Frascita murmured in return, "Alas, Juan! are you a Carlist?" Dolores, calling on all the saints in the calendar, hears them not, but faints away: all this passes in a moment. Suddenly an officer comes to the door of the coupé, and bids the travellers get down, in a rough uncourteous tone; but the moment he sees the stranger he touches his cap respectfully, but with a look of surprise. The stranger springs out, and in a hurried voice inquires, "Where is the General?" "He is near at hand," answers the officer. The stranger continues, with rapid utterance, "Manuel, you must take me as a prisoner; you must not recognise me: but be careful of these ladies, and treat them well; I hold you responsible for this. But no one in the diligence must know me for a Carlist. It is necessary—" "I understand you, Colonel," replies Manuel, quickly: "Here, Pedro, Tomas, take this prisoner immediately to the General; see that he does not escape!" (Then, in a whisper, he adds) "Use him well, he is one of us."

Juan turned hurriedly to Frascita, and in a soft and tender tone bade her farewell; but paused again, and said quickly, "Don't be afraid, sweet one; you will be treated with every respect, and sent on to Cordova as soon as possible: but tell me, my soul, where do you live?" "At Ronda," faintly murmured the maiden. "I would fain detain you, but we must part here. I will see you soon again, or perish: now, farewell." He could say no more, for Tia Dolores recovers from her fainting fit, and Juan hurries away.

Manuel politely requests the ladies to alight, and offers his hand to assist them; the rest of the passengers are roughly treated, and bound with cords. The diligence is ransacked from top to bottom; the luggage is plundered; all papers found are carefully preserved; the mules are driven off; dry brushwood is collected, a fire is kindled, and in a few minutes nothing remains of the huge lumbering vehicle but a smouldering heap of ashes.

"Pardon me, ladies, for a few minutes," said Manuel: "if you will seat yourselves under the shade of yonder olive-tree, I will go and look for a vehicle for you; there is a calesa somewhere;" then calling to a sergeant he ordered him to take charge of the two ladies, and see them treated with every respect. In a few minutes he returned with a calesa dragged along by the soldiers; to this are harnessed two of the mules taken from the diligence—one of the postilions is released and ordered to drive them to Cordova—an escort conducts them through the dreaded valley. So rapidly does all this pass, that it is like a dream to the bewildered Frascita: she strives to collect her thoughts—but in vain—there is a confused idea of shots fired—of gleaming arms—of men hurrying to and fro—of fierce faces—of words spoken which appear to her a bitter mockery, all mingled with an indescribable feeling that she has parted with something she would give worlds to recall, but what it is she knows not. Dolores, too, bewildered and half stupified with fright, can scarcely remember anything that has taken place; her teeth still chatter: garrulous by nature, she is now silent, or calls upon some favourite saint in a broken, inarticulate voice: she only knows that the diligence has been attacked and burnt, but how and by whom she has no settled recollection.

For many miles neither speaks.

The calesa rolls on over the rough and stony road at a rapid pace, the terrified driver urging on his mules with all the energy of a man escaping from an imminent danger. The sun, however, had set before they reached the Guadalquivir, and here a brilliant, although somewhat ominous scene, presented itself to the excited senses of the still bewildered maiden.

Just as the glorious sun had sunk beneath the horizon, a tremendous black range of heavy clouds arose rapidly above the wild and rugged summits of the Sierra Morena. Mass after mass of murkiest inky hue seemed to roll over the mountain tops and descend down their declivities into the valleys. Athwart this moving wall the pale blue lightning flashed incessantly, and hoarsely echoing from cliff to cliff, from rock to rock, the thunder growled along the hills; whilst overhead the early moon shone bright and clear in the deep purple sky, illuminating with her chaste radiance the foaming Guadalquivir, and fringing the edges of the clouds with her cold silvery light.

And far away the city of the Saracen lay spread below, enveloped in the deepest shadow.

Frascita, no longer a child, but full of thought, and still somewhat confused, gazed timidly at this scene of loveliness and fear—where the elements seemed contending for peace or war—where the soft and chastened moonlight appeared to strive for mastery with the fitful flashes of the blue lightning—where overhead was tranquillity, peace, and silent beauty, and in the distance war and the majesty of angry nature.

Until that day Frascita's mind had been tranquil and serene as the calm moonlight which shone on her own fair countenance. Alas! alas! those angry clouds—that crashing thunder—those fitful flashes—what are they but the symbols of her future life, when the strife of love shall agitate her unsuspecting heart! And is not that fearful strife already commenced? or why did she murmur "Juan, are you a Carlist?" A new existence, though full of tears and trouble, had opened on her tender mind, and yet she knew it not. The party crossed the Guadalquivir, and at length found themselves safely lodged at the Fonda de la Diligencia.

The master of this inn was at heart a keen Carlino, although he dared not declare it openly. The postilion, who belonged to the Fonda, of course told his master his own tale of the burning

of the diligence; but he was easily induced by a few dollars, judiciously applied, to spread the report that the vehicle had been plundered and burnt by robbers. Tia Dolores could disclose nothing more than the actual fact of its having been destroyed by fire; and Frascita kept her own counsel: so that the loyal people of Cordova obtained no certain information of the strength and proximity of the Facciosos. Rumours were, of course, in circulation, but uncertainty and unwillingness to believe anything of the progress of the Carlists prevented the truth from being known.

For a few days no opportunity occurred of procuring a conveyance to take Frascita and her aunt to their mountain home; and here we must leave them for a brief period, to return to our hero.

Conducted by the soldiers for some miles through a labyrinth of brushwood and rocks, Juan found himself before the unfastened door of a small charcoal-burner's hut, in front of which a solitary sentinel was pacing backwards and forwards.

"Is the General within?" inquired Juan.

Before the sentinel could answer, a quick and somewhat harsh voice shouted from the inside "Come in."

Juan entered; and there, stretched at full length on a gaudily striped though somewhat soiled manta, smoking a cigar, lay the most formidable, the most energetic, the most unfortunate, the most enterprising, and the most mysterious of all the leaders of the bands of Carlos Quinto. He who was here to-day—gone to-morrow! He by whom the nearly impracticable sierras were crossed with a rapidity which none could equal! He who was branded as a traitor by both parties! The pursuer and the pursued! The impenetrable and flying Gomez!

"Is that you, Colonel Juan?" said he, without rising from his recumbent position: "Welcome, my friend, welcome! What news from Andujar, Jaen, Baylen? What news from the capital? Has the gold taken effect? To whom do the populace lean? Will they rise, think you? Speak, Colonel!"

"No, General, they will not, and they dare not; for it is war to the knife, and they know it and fear it. No, the liberals are against us; they shout 'Viva la Constitucion!'—the people are against us, for they dread the re-establishment of the Inquisition.

I speak freely," continued Juan, noticing a frown that passed over the General's face. Gomez motioned him to proceed.

"The courtiers and the nobles are against us; they fear that the church lands and convents would be restored, and that they would have to disgorge their prey. The priesthood alone is faithful to the just cause."

"Well, well, Colonel, this is sorry news enough; I did hope that the people might declare for us. But what of that? In a few days I will make a dash at Cordova, perhaps at Granada, and then like wildfire overrun the Serrania de Ronda: I have good information that the mountaineers of those rugged sierras are well disposed to our cause."

Juan started—the Serrania de Ronda—he might chance to see the lovely Frascita again. He meditated a moment; a thought flashes across his mind: "General, I have for the sake of our just and righteous cause risked my life as a spy in the very strongholds of our enemies: will you permit me again to try the experiment? I am known but to two persons in Ronda: one is the famous smuggler Lope de la Vega, and through his agency I shall be able to get passports, and to come and go as free as the wind; the other—but no matter—is to be trusted. Yes, General, if you think fit, I will go into those rugged sierras, and soon, I trust, from north to south, from the plains of Tarifa to the lofty Pyrenees, no name shall be heard but that of our beloved Carlos."

With a slight laugh, and knocking the ashes off the end of his cigar, Gomez replied, "I am afraid, Colonel, you are too sanguine; but, in the name of the Virgin, make the attempt, if it pleases you. Do you go alone?"

"Yes, alone, and in disguise."

The General's eye kindled with a sudden fire as he added, "I will not be long after you; I love to move as rapidly as the lightning that flashes across the heavens: by the Cross of Rome, I will traverse that impenetrable and stony country like a winter torrent dashing from its mountains. But your information must be quick, there must be no delay, for we are in danger here already."

"General, I promise that in less than a fortnight you shall have news from me, or believe me dead;" but, muttered Juan to himself, "I must first go to Cordova."

Two days after the events just related, as Frascita and her aunt were in the court-yard of the inn, preparing to go to the cathedral, a man dressed as an arriero, or muleteer, entered it.

He was covered with dust, and had evidently come from off a long journey.

His coarse, dark, maroon-coloured jacket, with the cuffs and back adorned with slashes of gaudily-dyed cloth, was slung hussar-fashion at his left shoulder, leaving his right arm and body with only the white spotless shirt to protect them from the sun. A broad red woollen sash, in which was stuck a formidable knife, concealed the symmetry of his figure. Blue cloth trowsers, loose, and reaching only to a little below the knee, and ending in linen, just came down to the worked leather gaiters, which, looped at the top with a single fastening, and again at the foot, displayed the white stocking underneath; strong untanned leather shoes covered his feet, and a broad-brimmed conical velvet hat sheltered his face from the fierce glare.

The features of his countenance, which was remarkably dark and swarthy, were handsome, and his black eye glanced brightly as it fell upon the two ladies.

They passed him close as he stood near the gate of the court, but no token or even look of recognition passed on either side.

"Ha! this will do," muttered the seeming muleteer; "if woman's eyes, especially hers, cannot penetrate the disguise, who shall? How beautiful she looked!—a little pale, perhaps. I must get them away from this—but how? I may not be able to protect them a second time. Yes, they must be induced to go; but how am I to communicate with her? If I follow, the old one may know me again; and then this disguise:—I must see the host; for I have heard that, although he dares not declare it openly, he is one of us."

As he thus soliloquized in broken phrases, Juan, for it was he, found himself in one of the long galleries which surrounded the court-yard of the inn.

At the corner of the corridor stood a venerable-looking silver-haired old man. He looked intently and fixedly at our hero for a moment—then opened a door, and without speaking a word, beckoned to him to come in. Juan obeyed, without hesitation, the mysterious summons.

The old man carefully closed the door after him; then taking Juan's hands in his, with an agitated air and broken voice, his limbs trembling under him, he said, "My old eyes, then, were true. Oh! my son, what news from the beloved?"

Juan, surprised, answered quickly, "Whom mean you? I know you not."

"But I know you," replied the old man; "you are Colonel Juan B——; your father was one of my oldest friends. You are now aide-de-camp to General Gomez. You see I do know you. It was of Carlos Quinto I spoke, the true sovereign of Spain. Tell me, then, Hijo de mi alma, where is he? does his cause prosper?"

"Father, I fear not; yet, why should I say so? for amongst the mountains of Guipuscoa he still holds his own, and even now threatens Madrid."

The old man's dim eye lighted with a sudden gleam as he continued, "What you tell me, my son, is as the breath of new life to my old, worn-out, sinking frame. But you seem to fear that his success will not be permanent: tell me more, my son."

"Alas!" replied Juan, "those terrible heretical islanders, the English, are assisting the usurper with men and money; our people are divided amongst themselves, and I fear there are many traitors in our camps."

"Alas, alas! is it so? I feared it. But what news of my old acquaintance, the fiery Gomez?"

"He is near at hand," whispered Juan, in a low, fierce voice, "and in a few days he will be here—here, in this very town of Cordova."

"Ha! that warms my old heart again; would I were young, were it only to strike one blow for the righteous cause. But, my son, are you not in danger here? If you are discovered—"

"Father," interrupted Juan, "say no more; danger is familiar to me, and I have come on an errand which I must perform, although duty will admit of no delay, and this very evening I must leave Cordova. Perchance, father, you can assist me. There are two ladies in this fonda, inhabitants of the Sierra de Ronda, who must be warned to leave this place immediately. God help them! our rough soldiery are but sorry companions

for young, lovely, and helpless women; and I—and I have an interest in them."

"Say, in one of them," mildly interrupted the old man, with a low laugh: "I see how it is; you wish to see her, to warn her, without being discovered by the other; is it not so, my son?" Without waiting for an answer the old Carlist went to the door, and rung a small silver bell that lay on the table.

In a few minutes a lovely black-eyed little girl, of about ten years of age, entered the room, with a large bouquet of flowers, skipping and dancing like a sylph. Seeing a stranger, she became suddenly demure, and, laying down the flowers, turned round to leave the room.

The old man, however, prevented her, saying, "Come hither, my little Pepita; do not be afraid: this is a friend of mine; give him your hand."

Pepita pouted with her ruby lips, and cast down her eyes, but nevertheless peeped from under her long, silky eyelashes at the stranger's countenance, as she gave him her tiny hand. There was nothing repulsive there; on the contrary, a smile that went to the heart rested on his finely-formed features; it was irresistible; the cloud on her brow cleared away like an April shower, and in a moment the sylph-like Pepita regained her accustomed vivacity, and with a clear ringing voice she tenderly addressed the old Carlist, caressing him with those fairy-like hands, "I have brought you the flowers you so dearly love, dear father. I gathered them with my own hands, in the gardens of the palace of the Inquisition, before the dew was off: are they not sweet and blooming?"

"Yes, sweet and blooming as yourself, dear child. But say, Pepita, will you do me a service?"

"Oh yes, dear father, anything for you; do I not love you?" and she threw her slender arms round his neck, and kissed him fondly.

"Be quiet, you saucy one, and listen to me."

"Yes, father."

"There are two ladies in the fonda—Rondenians."

"Oh yes, I know them—one so pretty and so kind, and the other fat and so cross; I sat with them yesterday; the youngest calls me her dear little sister."

"Well, child, this gentleman—"

Pepita started back in surprise, clapped her little hands together, and burst into a fit of laughter.

"What is the matter with the mad thing?" asked the old man.

She stooped and whispered in his ear, "Father, how can a muleteer be a gentleman?"

"Hush, madcap! he is in disguise."

"Oh, I understand it all, now," replied the damsel, with intelligence beaming on her finely chiselled features.

"Yes, my dear child, this gentleman wishes to see the Señorita for a minute, on important business—and indeed it is necessary; so I want you to help him."

"Yes," said Juan, "if the Señorita will inform me where the ladies are gone, I might contrive to speak to her for a moment, or give her a note."

"Oh, I know where they are," quickly answered Pepita; "they are gone to the cathedral to offer up thanks to the Virgin of Mercy for their escape from some terrible danger. You will find them in the Capilla de los Moros; there is a shrine there—oh! so splendid, of solid silver—you cannot mistake it."

"But," said Juan, addressing the old man, "will it be safe for me to walk the streets? for, as I do not know my way, I should have to inquire it, and I might be asked some awkward questions. Can I get any safe person to conduct me there?"

"I will, myself," said Pepita, blushing; "that is, if the gentleman will allow me; but I must first speak to my mother; may I say, dear father, that this caballero is a friend of yours," and, added she, casting a quick glance at him, "of the righteous cause?"

"Yes, yes, my dear child, away with you."

"Hasta la vista Caballeros," said the damsel, as she vanished out of the room with a step so light and agile that it could scarcely be heard.

Juan was lost in astonishment. What grace, what beauty, what intelligence for so young a child! He could not refrain from remarking this to his venerable friend.

"Yes," answered he, "she is all that; and, what is more, she is good as she is beautiful. Pepita is no relative of mine—all,

all are gone—but the daughter of our host. I have given her what little education my poor brains and small means are capable of; and she repays me by her charming little attentions and endearments, and by her artless though sprightly conversation. But come, my young friend," added he, kindly, to Don Juan, who was suddenly lost in a profound reverie, for his thoughts were naturally wandering back to his own Biscayan home and beloved family, "you must not forget to have a note ready: here are writing materials."

"Pardon me, I pray you, if my thoughts were straying—dear little sisters, where are you now?"

The note was soon written, and contained but these few words:

"Frascita, you must leave this immediately; believe me, it is necessary. "JUAN."

Just as he had finished, Pepita glided into the room. What a charming little figure she was! Over her finely formed head was thrown a black lace mantilla, which fell in folds over her shoulders; and from under the shade of the lace peeped her small oval face. Her black eyes, fringed with long silky lashes, sparkled under her arched eyebrows, which were smooth and black as if cut from the glossy skin of a mole; her nose was thin and slightly aquiline; her delicate mouth, dimpling with smiles, disclosed between the ruby of her lips her small pearly teeth; her complexion was clear and slightly olive, but the warm blood mantling in her cheeks diffused around a roseate colour; her fairy-like form was shown to advantage by a black silk dress, quite plain, and fitting tight to the body—full and short in the skirts, so as to display a round and tapering ankle and miniature feet. She could not be said to walk; her movement was now that of the bounding gazelle, now that of the fish gliding through the waters, or the bird winging its way through the clear air; now stately, yet graceful as—what shall I say?—as that of her own sisterhood, the Andalusian maiden; and I can say no more. In her hand she held a carved ivory fan, embossed with graven silver, which she opened and shut with a peculiar grace, as she said, slightly blushing, "If the caballero is ready, I will be his guide." It was near midday; and as Pepita glided along the narrow tortuous streets, now glowing in the sun-glare, closely followed by the muleteer, they encountered nothing but a few

old women and half-starved dogs. Cordova was as a deserted city; in truth, the inhabitants were enjoying the siesta during the heat of the day.

They entered that vast cathedral—so vast that the whole Moorish army is said to have assembled within its walls, to pray to their prophet before their final effort to preserve INTACT the united kingdom of Granada and Cordova.

Passing amidst hundreds of green and white marble columns, which to the eye appear confused, Pepita pointed to a beautiful and richly decorated, though somewhat small chapel. In this, before the altar (the front of which was of solid silver, and on which there stood a custodia, also of solid silver, full seven feet high), kneeled two females in the act of prayer.

Juan had no difficulty in recognising Frascita, for his heart began to throb violently.

Pepita put her finger to her lips, and whispering gently, "I will wait for you at the gate," vanished amidst the grove of pillars.

Juan pushed gently open the richly worked gate of the chapel, and knelt down behind Frascita. Hearing the noise, she turned suddenly round, but did not seem to recognise Juan, and apparently resumed her devotions. After a short time had elapsed, our hero arose and stood close to the half-opened gate, and waited until they had finished their prayers. As they went out, Frascita stopped a little behind, as if to cross herself with the holy water which stood in a small alabaster basin near the entrance. As she passed the seeming muleteer she held out one hand to him, whilst with the other she enjoined silence by putting her taper fingers to her rosy lips. Juan slipped the paper into her hand. Oh, how his frame thrilled at the touch! Not a word escaped their lips; but one tender and speaking glance was exchanged as their eyes met.

She knew him then—yes—and she had known him in the courtyard of the inn; but, with a young woman's keen perception, she had seen at a glance that he wished to escape observation in so public a place; and she feared her aunt's discretion, should she too recognise our hero.

Juan did not attempt to follow, but waited at the porch until he was joined by his little fairy guide. She from behind a pillar

had watched the whole proceeding, and concealed herself from the ladies.

Giving Frascita and her aunt time to arrive at the inn before them, this apparently singularly assorted pair followed slowly and at a distance, and reached the fonda in safety. As they entered, Pepita with an arch smile said, "Adios, señor, for the present; if you will go to your friend's room, I will bring you an answer from the sweet young lady:" and away she tripped.

"Stay, Pepita, for a moment," said Juan, hurriedly; "cannot I see the señorita myself?"

"No, señor, that is impossible," she briskly answered: "trust to me."

Juan entered the room; the old Carlist was not there. In a few minutes, although it seemed an age to our hero, Pepita came back with a serious and demure countenance; yet one might have observed a little malicious smile about her mouth.

"Have you succeeded, my fairy messenger? Have you an answer for me?"

"No, the lady could not write one, as there were visitors in the room."

"How provoking, how vexatious!"

"Oh, señor, how impatient you are!—did I not tell you to trust to me? I took the lady a bouquet of flowers; and as I gave them to her, I whispered in her ear, 'He sends you these; is there any answer for *him*?' The lady started, but said quickly, giving me this rosebud back, 'Yes, after to-morrow.'"

"Pray God it may be in time," muttered Juan to himself.

"Do you understand it?" continued the damsel; "I do not: but I suppose this pretty flower is for you."

"Yes, dear Pepita; give it to me," and he took it and kissed it rapturously; but not content with that, he imprinted a kiss on the glowing cheek of the blushing Pepita.

"For shame, señor," said she, petulantly: "but see, there are your mules ready loaded in the courtyard as if for the road—it is evident you must not stay any longer: this is my father's doing—there is danger. Hark, some one calls me. Adios, cavallero; may God go with you, and may you and the cause prosper."

Then, without waiting any further reply or question, she left

the room; but this time her step was slow and timid, and from beneath her dark eyelashes there crept a pearly tear.

Juan descended into the courtyard. There he found a large string of mules, besides his own, some laden with oil and wine, others with grain. As Juan stood there, a man dressed also as an arriero, or muleteer, came up to him and whispered, "Señor, there is danger; you must not stay in Cordova. You are a friend of the great smuggler Lope de la Vega; so am I. You are going to Ronda; so am I. Here is a fresh passport for you. But you must come with me; and we must pass through the Puerta de Aceite."

"And who told you all this, my friend? Who has done this for me?"

"A friend to Carlos," answered the arriero, grinning. "But come along; the mules are all loaded; see how well I have balanced their packs. But, señor, don't forget to speak Andaluz —that is, if you can:" and he shouted to his beasts, "Hup, hup, arre mulos — arre cataneo—arre bavieco—arre;" and getting them into a line, away they clattered through the ill-paved streets.

Such was the wild, adventurous sort of life our hero had been living for some time past. Clever, daring, and of a frank disposition, he was easily accustomed to any change of dress or manners, and equal to any contingency that might arise in a path so fraught with dangers and difficulties as the one in which he was now treading.

We shall not follow him or his thoughts, nor Frascita and her aunt on their long and tiresome journey to Ronda through the rugged sierras, for no adventures that I know of happened to either: both arrived safely, and had been a whole day in the Eagle's nest before the events related in the first chapter occurred.

Yet these were the stirring scenes in which Frascita had twice met the handsome and dashing Carlist, and in this short time there had been sown in the bosoms of both the mighty seeds of love; but, oh! what a stormy time was this for such a flower to bud!

CHAPTER III.

Ronda by Moonlight—The Miller soliloquizes—The Open Window—The Young Carlist and the Christina Maiden—The Charcoal-Burner and his fierce Employer—The Watcher Watched.

He who has not passed a summer evening amongst gardens in the south of Spain, has never felt the climate of a terrestrial paradise. When, after the fierce heat of the glaring day, the gentle night-breeze comes softly fanning the air, rustling the leaves of the olive-trees, and bearing on its wings the perfume of the rose, the orange-flower, and the magnolia, which lift up their drooping yet beautiful heads refreshed by the cooling dew. When the full moon, hanging in the deep purple sky, surrounds herself with a glowing light, and fringes with her soft rays the dark and frowning rocks which cast deep shadows into the valley below, where a silver stream meanders like a white shining serpent. When from every orange, every myrtle grove, the answering nightingales pour their lovelorn songs, filling the night with plaintive music, which, mingling with the murmuring splash of falling waters, creates a melody so soft, so pleasing, so harmonious, that the enraptured hearer might well awake and exclaim, "Such was Paradise!" and such was the night that followed the day of the bull-fight.

It was near midnight, yet the Alameda was still thronged with lovely women and admiring men, promenading amidst the trees, or seated in picturesque groups on the benches, enjoying the fresh breeze of the night or listening to the nightingales, whilst occasionally the joke and laugh went merrily round. Outside, too, in the open space in front of the enclosure, the mirth was boisterous, where still the dull glare from the fires of the gipsy women cooking fritters, threw a red light on the dark swarthy figures of the muleteers and charcoal-burners that stood in noisy chattering groups around them.

On a bench at the farthest end of the Alameda reclined

a figure wrapped up in a large dark cloak; apparently lost in contemplation, he paid no heed to the glorious scene before him.

Immediately beneath his feet yawned a precipice of several hundred feet in depth, the verge fenced by an iron paling; the face of this for a considerable distance was smooth, and as if scarped by the hand of man.

In the broken valley below, groves of myrtle and orange trees, and flowery gardens, were mingled in strange yet beautiful confusion with dark and massive rocks far away into the distance; amidst them wound like a thread of silver the clear bright stream of the Rio Verde, now concealed from the view by a huge mass of rock, now leaping and foaming over some slippery ledge, now turning a mill, now irrigating in slender streams some scented rose-bed, whilst upon all this the moon shed her soft chaste rays, and from every grove the nightingales poured a flood of song.

But he who lay there heard not the voices of the birds, the murmuring of the waters; he smelled not the perfume of the flowers; he saw not that lovely valley, that glistening stream, for his thoughts were a chaos of evil, where hatred, jealousy, and revenge were struggling in wild confusion. Oh, baneful contrast! around this man nature was a shining heaven, within him was a hell. An hour has elapsed, the Alameda is nearly deserted, yet he stirs not; but in that hour what has passed in his wolfish soul? If thoughts are crimes, what had he not in that short hour committed? Dark ingratitude, base treachery, horrid murder, flashed in quick succession before him; yet his mind revolts not from them. He is still wrapped in contemplation, not because his feelings waver and his heart trembles, but that he has as yet devised no certain plan of gaining his end.

One might have thought that he was asleep, but for a sinister and demoniacal smile that played around his compressed lips.

And who is this fiend in human form, this ghoul, this meditator of evil? It is Mateo, the miller of the Moraima.

See, he rises from his recumbent position as if suddenly awakened, and with a keen, quick, searching glance looks around: there is no one there; he is apparently satisfied, and sinks back again upon the bench; but as he still sits there his thoughts find vent in broken sentences; now he speaks aloud as if addressing

some one, now he mutters indistinctly to himself: let us read them for him.

"I care not; whosoever brings most grist to my mill, he is the man for me. Viva Carlos Quinto, say I, for if he had not put his foot into the stirrup to mount the throne of Spain, the red gold I so dearly love would not have poured forth so freely; and Viva Roma, for after all she is the spring whence the stream flows, and Carlos is only the channel that brings it down in such plentiful rivers to feed us pobrecitos; and, above all, Viva el Padre, who distributes it with so bountiful a hand. That Lope thinks me a savage fool, ay, a fool with a ready hand but small wit—that the gun and the knife are my only assistants: now let him beware lest I foil him with his own weapons. Yes, he is cunning and crafty as an old grey fox, and I am rash, savage, impetuous, and headstrong as a bull in the arena. But behold, I have taken up my cards, and they are good; and he shall find that, when the stake is large, the miller can play as deep a game as the smuggler: not to break with Don Carlos, but to make away with his emissary; to give Frascita a husband, and deprive her of a lover; to dupe the cunning Lope, yet keep him my friend: but is that possible? We shall see. Yes, beauty, and gold, and revenge, these are the stakes I play for. That madman of a Carlist to show himself so openly in the bull-ring; but that may serve my purposes. Frascita knows him, loves him, that too will assist me. But he must die—he must die—betwixt him and me there is no compromise; it must be annihilation, for we cannot breathe the same air. This stranger hath dared to cross my path, and is my rival; ay, and I fear a successful one; his blood therefore must flow: will not that be sweet revenge? Frascita slights and despises me; I will marry her in spite of man or hell. Is not that a glorious revenge to contemplate? Lope, too, by his superior cunning, thinks that he has obtained a strong ascendancy over my weak mind, but I will outwit him. Will not that, too, be revenge? Ay, revenge! revenge! revenge!" (and he hissed the word through his close-knit teeth.) "A thousand curses on this stranger! I cannot denounce him openly, for then I should lose my gold; I dare not do it secretly, for that wily Lope would suspect me. Perhaps I may yet be mistaken, and Frascita does not love him: but no, but no, she

does; furies light on him! At all risks he must be removed from my path, blotted out for ever from my sight: Spain cannot hold us two: and yet I can fix on no settled plan; and as we meet to-morrow, I must appear *his* friend; ten thousand devils! *his* friend!"

Thus partly soliloquized, partly thought, this fierce and bloody man. He who was sometimes called, when it could not come to his ears, "the Demon of the Moraima." He it was who in the streets of San Roque, in the noon-day, and on the Sabbath, caused the unfortunate muleteer, Pepito el Rubio, to kneel down, and in that humble posture to receive his death from the muzzle of his escopeta. This was *he* at whose name the inmates of the convent, in the recesses of the dark cork-wood, shuddered and crossed themselves. The smuggler, the traitor, the murderer. But in that country, and at that time especially, the life of man, as that of a beast, was of small value; the law an empty sound, or an echo from the mountains. Then start not, reader, at such deeds, for they were common, where civil strife desolated the villages, and laid waste the fertile vegas, or concealed itself among the rocky sierras; where the war was that of savages, implacable and murderous; where even helpless women were destroyed in cold blood. A war unnatural in its origin, ferocious in its progress, miserable and pusillanimous in its execution, demoralizing in its consequence, and its end anarchy and confusion.

Such were the characteristics of those times; then who can wonder at such crimes, at such a monster?

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During these soft moonlit hours, at the open window of a house which stood by itself in a small though pretty garden not far removed from the brink of the frowning cliff on which is perched the Eagle's nest, sat Frascita with her forehead buried in her hand, whilst the night-air gently fanned her feverish cheeks, and the pale moonbeams shone on her dark lustrous tresses, which fell in loose and graceful masses over her bosom and round the taper arm which rested on the window-sill; the other hung still and motionless by her side, and in that hand were some faded flowers. She is not asleep; for a tear rolls gently down her smooth, soft cheek, and a convulsive sigh heaves her swelling bosom.

Betrothed by her uncle, whom she fondly loves, to the formidable miller, no wonder then that she is agitated; for she now hates, yet fears him. If she before disliked his presence, she now loathes it; for a bright being has passed before her senses. Yet the appearance of this being has been as a meteor flashing on her path—an *ignis fatuus* which she dreads, yet needs must follow and see again.

Her heart, her whole existence, is full of uncontrollable and passionate love, which with the power of an earthquake has disturbed her mind, and left there a wild and harassing confusion. She feels that between this being and her there is a great gulf stretched; but over this she would fain pass on the thin and narrow plank of hope, the end of which she cannot see.

As Frascita sat there in this dejected, sorrowful mood, the notes of a guitar struck by a masterly hand issued from the garden beneath the window. She started from her painful reverie, arose, and looked out; but she could see no one. Presently a voice began to accompany the music. "It is he," whispered her beating heart. The voice came nearer and nearer; and she could distinguish the words of a simple melody, sung in a clear, manly tone. She threw back her disordered tresses, and listened:—

"The nightingales are singing now
In every orange grove,
The splashing fountains murmuring flow—
And sleepest thou, my love?

The stars are set in deepest blue,
The perfumed zephyrs rove
Amidst the rose-buds fresh with dew—
And sleepest thou, my love?

And hark, amidst the flood of song
Soft coos the plaintive dove,
The frowning cliffs the notes prolong—
And sleepest thou, my love?

The waters of the moonlit stream
Come dashing from above
Like sparkling visions of a dream—
And sleepest thou, my love?

Awake, my soul, my love draw near,
And listen to my vow
While all is still, and none can hear
My tale of love save thou."

Frascita mechanically leaned out of the window to hear the sounds, and catch the meaning of the words that were sung by a voice she already knew but too well. As she looked out, the faded nosegay fell from her hands on to the grass beneath.

A man came out from the shadow of the trees, and stood for a moment in the moonlight. He stooped and picked up the flowers, kissed them, and placed them near his heart. As he did so, she shrank back into the shadow of the room.

For some moments neither dared to speak.

At last a voice whispered, in a soft and tender tone, "Frascita."

"Oh, Juan, why do you run such a risk?"

"Frascita."

"Oh, fly, fly from this! Should Mateo see you!"

"Frascita! dear Frascita!"

"Alas, I dare not. Oh, blessed Virgin, have pity on me and help me!"

"Will you not speak, Frascita?"

"Juan, spare me."

"Oh, Frascita, life of my soul, will you not answer me?"

"Oh, spare me, spare me!"

Frascita's words were inaudible to Juan. She clasped her little hands together in agony. Fear and love were struggling in her heart. But it was not of long duration, for, led by an irresistible impulse, she drew near the window again. Again the pale moonlight fell on her waving tresses. He had retired.

"Juan, hist."

A moment after a rosebud, also withered, fell at her feet. She too took it up, kissed it, and placed it in her bosom. As she did so, the full flood of love gushing from her heart rushed circling through her veins. Her bosom heaved—her eyes beamed with softened brilliancy—her heart throbbed wildly—and she knew that she loved with all the ardour and intensity of an Andalusian maiden's first love.

"Juan, Juan," she softly murmured.

"I am here, dearest. Oh, thanks, thanks for those words! Now these withered flowers are ten thousand times more precious to me than all the roses of the valley. Frascita, do you love me? Say but this, and I am happy."

"Oh, fly, oh, fly, Juan!—you are beset with dangers here."

"I care not, if you love me, Frascita."

"Oh, Juan, this is madness."

"Is it madness to love you, my Frascita?"

"Oh, Juan, are you not a Carlist? Is it not death if you are discovered? Oh, fly, fly, I beseech you."

"What matters it? Are we not of the same country, the same people, the same faith? When these unhappy feuds are over"——

"Still, if you love me, fly, Juan—my uncle"——she dared not say Mateo.

"And who is your uncle, Frascita?"

"He who left the bull-ring with you."

"Lope?"

"Yes."

"Gracias á Dios, he too is a Carlist!"

"Oh, Juan, believe it not, I beseech you: he is a crafty man."

At that moment a rustling sound fell on Juan's ear, as if the leaves and twigs of the orange-trees had been pushed aside by an animal feeding—then again all was silent. At the same time might have been seen the dark, swarthy figure of a charcoal-burner creeping along the edge of the precipice, clinging with the tenacity and agility of a cat with his hands and feet to the projecting and rugged rocks, and moving as stealthily and noiselessly. He was soon lost in the broad shadow cast by the moonlight deep into the valley.

"Juan, I heard a noise."

"It was nothing, dearest, but the rustling of the leaves by the wind."

"But there is no wind, Juan."

"It was fancy then, dearest."

"Oh, no, no, Juan!—If we are watched?"

"Who is there to watch us?"

"He!"—and the maiden shuddered.

"And who is *he*, Frascita?"

"I cannot, I dare not tell you, Juan."

"But Lope shall," muttered Juan to himself.

Steps were now heard approaching, and the light of a distant torch threw a red glare down the street.

"It is my uncle. Oh, Juan, go!—you must not be seen here: go, if you love me!"

"Good night, dearest: I will see you to-morrow."

"Fare thee well, Juan;" and the maiden retired from the window.

With a joyous step the light-hearted Carlist vanished amidst the orange-trees.

Frascita threw herself on a couch and burst into tears.

The charcoal-burner passed, though not unheeded, through the nearly deserted streets, and entered the Alameda. He proceeded straight to the farthest end, which was now dark from the shadow of the trees. He whistled; the whistle was returned.

"Hist, is that you, Manolo?" said the voice of the savage miller.

"Si, Señor, at your service."

"Have you succeeded?"

"Yes, I dodged him all the evening, and never lost sight of him for a moment, except when in the house, and then I watched the door like a cat does a mouse-hole. At last, about an hour or more ago, I saw him come out of his lodgings with a guitar in his hand. I followed him to the house in the garden by the French gate. You know it, Señor?"

"Yes, yes;" said Mateo, impatiently, "Lope lives there."

"Right, Señor. Well, I got over the wall, and creeping behind a bush near the edge of the precipice, lay there like a hare in its form. I held my breath; presently he began to play and sing underneath an open window; a señorita sat there—"

"Hell and furies!" interrupted Mateo, in a savage voice: "it was she."

"The señorita dropped something, I could not see what; but he picked it up, and I saw him, by the moonlight, kiss it."

"Curses on him! No doubt, a letter. My brain is on fire. Why did you not stab him, Manolo?"

"Because you did not tell me to do it, señor Mateo. Oh, I could have done it so handily! he was so close to me at one time that my fingers itched." And the ruffian mechanically grasped with his hand the long knife that was stuck in his dirty sash.

"Would that you had put your knife into his heart—but no, not yet. Go on, Manolo; did they speak?"

"O yes, a long time; I heard the señorita tell him to go away."

"Did he go?"

"No, I left him there."

"What did they talk about?"

"I don't know, señor Mateo, exactly; but I think they were love-making."

"A hundred thousand devils! She does love him, then. Did not I read that scream aright? Are you sure it was the man?"

"How could I mistake? Is he not the tallest and handsomest man at the fair?"

"Yes, yes, curses on him! that is what has bewitched the girl. You must continue to watch him, Manolo; here is money for you; now, good night! leave me."

"This may be useful to you, before long," said Manolo, as he departed, touching his knife, and grinning: "Good night, señor."

I said that the charcoal-burner was not unheeded as he passed through the deserted streets.

Scarcely had he quitted the garden, like a stealthy wolf, when another man, in the dress of an arriero, followed close on his steps, but keeping in the dark sides of the streets. He, too, entered the Alameda, and concealed himself behind a tree. He did not remain there, however, for more than a few minutes, but disappeared as silently as he had come.

To explain this we must revert to the time when Lope quitted the bull-ring with the handsome stranger.

Conducted by Lope down a winding and nearly precipitous path, Juan found himself amongst the beautiful gardens mentioned in the first part of the chapter.

As they seated themselves under a shady olive-tree, with the clear bright stream running at their feet, Lope said—

"Here, Colonel Juan, we can talk freely; I have much, much to thank you for."

"How so, Lope? If there are any thanks due, they are due to you."

"Did not you protect two ladies, Rondenians, when the diligence was burnt, somewhere near Andujar?"

"Who told you of this?"

"One of the ladies. Had you not been known to me before, believe me, this would have been a sufficient passport to my heart. But it was rash of you to do the Matador's part, though you did it so successfully. She must have recognised you."

"Who?"

"La señora Dolores."

"I think not."

"But it was she who told me of your rescuing them from ladrones, in the most gallant manner; and I suspect it was you who persuaded them to leave Cordova. Have you heard the news? It is rumoured here that Gomez has attacked Cordova, burnt and plundered it."

"No, indeed; he has begun soon."

"This will make the authorities here more suspicious; you must be cautious. There is one man, too—he to whom I spoke as we came out of the ring—that you must be careful not to offend; he is dangerous."

"What! he who was sitting by Frascita?"

"How—you know her name?"

"Yes," said Juan, carelessly, "I heard her aunt call her so."

"Well—you must be careful, Colonel Juan; for if you are not, your situation here will be precarious in the extreme. But, above all things, do not offend Mateo; you will meet him to-morrow."

Juan promised caution; how he kept it has been already seen.

The rest of their conversation referred entirely to the prospects of the Carlist party.

After they had parted, Lope called one of his most trusty followers to him (of whom many were at the fair), and directed this man to keep watch over the movements of the young Carlist—to see if he was followed—and by whom. He dreaded, and with good reason, the jealous and ferocious disposition of the miller; for to his clear-seeing mind it was evident, from the almost complete silence of Frascita concerning her acquaintance with the stranger, both in the adventure of the diligence and at Cordova, that more had passed between them than she was willing

to confess. He knew that she disliked Mateo; that she was of a susceptible and loving disposition; and that the Carlist was young, prepossessing, and eminently handsome. His intelligent follower had watched the watcher, and this will account for the third party in the garden.

Who of these three? — this fair girl, agitated by love, by hopes, and fears; this fierce and jealous lover; this light-hearted and unsuspecting rival—who of these three slept best that night?

CHAPTER IV.

The Patio of the Smuggler's House—The Conversation—The Black Horse is bought—The Ruined Fort.

Love has been likened to many things; but there grows a flower in Spain, the very type of that burning and ardent love that had sprung up so suddenly in the breast of Don Juan. The aloe, with its towering yet graceful stem, its feathered tresses, grand yet elegant, surrounded and carefully guarded by its strong and prickly leaves, grows in secret; these are the affections, the passions, and the energies of the heart, developing day by day, until forth bursts the flower in all its beauty and majesty. Then hour by hour the leaves decay—pride, affection, ambition, wither, droop, and die; and behold it stands alone, and can never bloom again.

Did Juan dream of Frascita? did Frascita dream of Juan?—we know not; but if they did, what a wild and tangled maze must those dreams have been!

Love is not prone to reason, but to hope; the future is all in all; what though the present be as dark and stormy as the hurricane cloud of the tropics, there is always a little opening through which hope gleams like a sun ray. Thus it was with our hero. Nothing could be more desperate than his love: had he calmly reasoned upon it, he would have seen the fearful rocks and shoals amidst which he was sailing; he did not, but let his vessel drive with all her canvas spread, with nothing but love and daring at the helm to steer him through these yawning dangers.

When he awoke, his first thoughts were to see the lovely Frascita again; and with the daring energy of his character, to think was to determine, to determine to act.

As he passed through the dark porte-cochère of his lodgings, the dusky figure of a charcoal-burner glided out before him like the red Indian of the Far West.

But we must precede our hero to his destination.

The patio, or court of Lope's house, was of the most luxurious description. The pavement, of diamond-shaped slabs of dark green marble from the Sierra Morena, was carefully swept and sprinkled with rose-water ; in the middle a small white marble fountain of grotesque workmanship threw small jets of water from a hundred mouths into a porphyry basin, and filled the court with a murmuring sound. On three sides of the square, raised a step higher than the level of the court, were rows of small marble pillars, green and white alternately, supporting small arabesque or Moorish arches quaintly carved and embossed with gold and azure in imitation of the Court of Lions; between these pillars were pots of orange-trees and camellias in full blossom, perfuming all around.

A dark awning stretched over the quadrangle prevented the glare of the day from entering, and threw a soft and dreamy repose on everything below.

In this cool and fragrant retreat sat the smuggler and his lovely niece.

The conversation had evidently been interesting, for her dark eye was sparkling with uncommon lustre, and a bright blush shone through her transparent skin. What was it that had called the mantling blood into those smooth and peach-like cheeks ?

Lope loved his niece: he had no children, and all his affections were centred in her. Engaged in daring and lawless, although successful pursuits, his mind found a delicious repose in her society ; she was the haven of his rest, to which he flew from the wild turmoil of his career. Besides, Frascita was an orphan, and had been left to his care by those he once had dearly loved. She herself was a being formed to be cherished—bright, and glowing, and warm as the skies of her own land. No wonder then that the bold smuggler dearly loved the gay, the charming Frascita. And there they sat—the dark, tall, athletic, powerful man, with his hair just tinged with grey—and the graceful, elegant, blooming girl.

" Come, hija mia, let there be confidence between us—I am going to be your father-confessor to-day. Frascita, you have a secret—and it is now necessary for your good that nothing should be concealed from me. You know this stranger? "

Frascita started, and blushed crimson. The very words the detested Mateo had used—but oh! how different was the tone in which they were uttered—how different the look that accompanied them!

"You need not tell me, if it pains you," continued Lope; "that pretty blush is sufficient: but are you aware, dear niece, who and what the stranger is?"

"Yes, yes, dear uncle; I saw it all when the diligence was attacked. He is a Carlist."

"And you met him at Cordova—is it not so? And you have seen him here—and spoken to him—and he has serenaded you—and you have given him flowers."

Frascita turned her head away, and hid her face in her hands—and perhaps thought that her uncle was a wizard to know all these little particulars.

"How is this, Frascita?" continued Lope; "you do not deny it; it is true then. There has been great imprudence, but it may yet be set right if"—

"If what, dear uncle?" said Frascita, looking up, a little reassured.

"You will consent to marry Mateo immediately."

"Never," said Frascita, shuddering.

"Remember—you are betrothed to Mateo; and although you may never have loved him, you have not avoided his presence."

"But, uncle"—

"What, Frascita?"

"I had never seen Juan then." This was said in the most charming, naïve manner possible. Lope took no notice of it, however; but continued—"So you are determined to reject your affianced husband, the choice of your uncle."

"Oh, speak not so—how can I love that dark, that fearful man?—you cannot wish it, dear, dear uncle."

And she threw her arms round him, and looked up into his face with those beaming eyes. Who could resist that beseeching look? Not Lope. He kissed her forehead gently as he replied in a softened tone—"Well, well, niece, I will not press it on you; for indeed I feel that I cannot; but it must not be concealed from you that there are very great difficulties to overcome—that Mateo"—

"Mateo; always Mateo!" cried Frascita, pettishly. "Is he an ogre to frighten children with? Am I not too Andaluz?"

"Yes, yes, dear niece, in everything," said Lope, looking at her proudly and fondly.

"But, uncle," continued Frascita impetuously, "he threatened me—must I bear that too? I'm an Andalucian maiden."

"Ha! did he so?" muttered Lope to himself:—"he is already jealous then."

"Yes, yes, he bade me—me, your niece—beware!" And she drew her slender form up to its full height, and sparks seemed to flash from her eyes, as she added, "Sooner than wed him now, I would cast myself over that awful bridge where the Rio Verde dashes five hundred feet below."

"Hush, hush hija mia; we must go with the old adage, 'Fair and softly wins the day.' You must smooth those frowns, which do not become you; and at least receive Mateo kindly and courteously for my sake—for all our sakes."

"Uncle, I will; but I beseech you, urge me no further on this topic—see—it will kill me."

"I am then to understand that you love this Colonel Juan."

"Love him—do I love him?" said the maiden distractedly. "It is folly—it is rashness—it is madness; but it is now too late—I cannot turn back, and I would not."

"Curses on these political differences!" thought Lope: "but for these all might go on well, and Frascita might be happy; but now, whichever way I turn, I see nothing but dangers and difficulties for her—for me—for all of us: but I too once loved."

Thus far had the confessions of the beauty of Ronda proceeded, when a servant entered, and informed Lope that a handsome young caballero wished to see him.

"You had better retire, dear niece," said the smuggler, "as I wish to speak to this caballero alone." Frascita obeyed reluctantly, and with her eyes cast upon the ground, for her heart but too readily divined who the handsome stranger was. Yet, although her uncle wished her to retire, the wish was uttered in so kind a tone that her heart was a little reassured.

Whether she peeped or not I must leave my fair readers to guess. Could I change my sex, and be in love, I do not know what I should do under such circumstances; but as it is——

The young Carlist entered, and after the usual salutations his eye evidently wandered round the court in search of something, as he said, "I have come thus early, Señor Lope, as I was most anxious to see you."

"Say, rather, my niece," said Lope, with that kind of laugh which says "You see you cannot deceive me."

"Nay, nay, I did not know that the Señorita was your relative before last night."

"Let us be frank with one another, Colonel Juan; this is but at best an unfortunate business, and I will confess to you that I do not see the end of it."

"How is it an unfortunate business? Do you call it a misfortune to love the fairest girl in Andalucia, and to dream of hopes that a mutual flame is kindled in her breast;—is that a misfortune, Señor Lope?"

"Yes," repeated Lope calmly, "it is a misfortune, and one that we shall all feel deeply, if indeed it does not altogether overwhelm us."

"I cannot see it in that light."

"Lovers never can," rejoined Lope with a slight sneer. "But to be explicit, I must point out to you the almost insurmountable difficulties there are to encounter."

"Thank you for those words; I will overcome them all."

"In the first place, my niece is betrothed."

"Betrothed! and to whom?" fiercely exclaimed Juan.

"To Mateo."

"And who and what is this Mateo, this formidable Mateo, whom you all seem to fear so much?"

"Fear!" said Lope haughtily: "you are mistaken, Colonel; I at least fear no man; but revengeful and unscrupulous, rich, powerful, and commanding, the miller of the Moraima is well known, and proportionably dreaded."

"And to such a man," cried Juan bitterly, "is the tender Flower of the Sierras betrothed."

"I could not help it," said Lope remorsefully: "it was her father's dying wish: Frascita is an orphan."

"And does this Mateo love your niece?"

"I fear so; nay, I am sure of it; otherwise gold would have some influence over him, for that he prizes dearly."

"Ha!" said Juan musingly; "this man may be bought, then: this may assist our plans."

"Yes, yes, no doubt the dollars have great weight with him; but in this instance I fear they will not succeed."

"They must be tried, however: I have funds at my disposal which"—

"I know, I know, my friend," interrupted the smuggler; "but this is not all. You are suspected already, for I know that you are watched. What your life is worth, if you are discovered, you well know. This war to the knife has made men savages: if it were hinted that you were a Faccioso—pardon me, Colonel, for making use of the word—a file of the guard, a few loaded muskets, fuego, and what are you? Forgive me, my friend, but I wish to impress more caution on you. You have trusted yourself in my hands, and you are now bound to me by a dearer tie than I dreamed of; for he who has Frascita's love has mine also; and she has confessed to me that she does love you: I am therefore bound more than ever to watch over your safety. I have given out that you are a friend of mine from Almeria, engaged in a vast smuggling business (the safest character, by the way, to assume), and that you have come up to the fair to purchase horses, and for such you must condescend to pass for the present. But again I warn you, Colonel, to beware of Mateo. I do not think he will betray you; but if his jealousy is aroused by discovering that you are his rival, he will stop at nothing for revenge. But come, Colonel, let us go and look at the fair before all the horses are bought."

Juan seemed reluctant to stir.

"No, no, not now," said the smuggler, laughing; "I understand you; but business first, pleasure afterwards. Do not forget we have to meet the Padre."

"But one moment."

"Not now, not now; after the bull-fight."

"But one word."

"No, no, it will unfit you for the conference; you will be quarrelling with Mateo."

Juan yielded with a bad grace, grievously disappointed at not seeing his charming mistress; but still Lope was her uncle, her guardian—so they went out together.

The fair was held on a plain, or rather table-land, just outside the gates of the town, where a fort, now in ruins, once threatened destruction to the Eagle's nest.

Wild-looking, gaunt cattle with huge spreading horns stood there, lazily flapping the flies off with their tufted tails; black pigs jostled, and grunted, and squealed horribly; horses with their long thick tails carefully rolled up, and tied in huge knots, filled the air with their shrill neighing and pawed the ground impatiently.

As they passed through the throng, Juan noticed that many men dressed as muleteers, peasants, and charcoal-burners saluted Lope in a peculiar manner, and passed on without speaking; and amongst the groups standing chaffering and gesticulating vehemently round some long-tailed haca, individuals would suddenly cease talking and give the same salute. So frequently did this occur, that Juan could not forbear from remarking it to the smuggler.

"They are my sons," replied Lope, laughing. "I have a large family, Colonel Juan; you will see more of them by and bye—and here comes one."

The smuggler made a sign to a little, swarthy, active, merry-looking fellow, gaily dressed in a zamarra ornamented with silver filagree buttons, a yellow sash, and gaily worked botines; a cigarillo in his mouth; a cachiporra in his hand; and his peaked velvet hat, with a gay silk handkerchief underneath, cocked on one side with a jaunty air. As he came up to them, he made a low bow to our hero, and his little black eyes twinkled with a cunning expression.

It was his friend the muleteer of Cordova. Had Juan looked round before, he might have seen this man following them at a little distance; and it was he who had watched the charcoal-burner.

"Is it all right, Pepe?" said Lope.

"You are watched," briefly responded he.

"By whom?"

"By him you know of."

"Ha! I must see after this. I must leave you for a short time, Colonel. Keep up the character. Pepito will be your guide; you may trust him."

So saying the smuggler turned away, and was soon lost in the crowd.

"Well, my merry little friend of the Sierra Morena, what part are you playing in the comedy?" said Juan, addressing his old companion.

"Sancho Panza, Señor," replied Pepe, grinning.

"How so?"

"I wait on your Excellency."

"Ha, ha! I am Don Quixote then! But where is my Rosinante?"

"That is just what I was going to observe to your Excellency. Will it please you to look at the horses? You will want a good one, take Pepe's word for it. There is such a haca here; he belongs to a friend of mine; he is of the royal breed. The English officers want to get him; but you must buy him. He is an entero—black as the night—fast as the wind—active as a goat—gentle as a lamb—tame as a dog. Such loins!—such a back!—such legs!—such a shoulder! He can carry twenty arrobas, or I'm no judge of horseflesh. Come and look at him—this way, Señor—you must buy him."

So saying, the chattering but faithful muleteer bustled through the crowd to where a noble-looking horse was led up and down in a circle of admiring lookers-on.

The horse was in a white foam, and his nostrils seemed to breathe fire; he had been running a race with an officer's horse from Gibraltar, and the excitement was intense, for he had won it. His present owner, a tall, dark, swarthy, gaunt man, seemed to regard the animal as a second Bavieca. Juan inquired his price. Every eye was immediately turned on our hero.

"Tres ciento duros," proudly replied the owner, patting the horse on his arched neck; "not a peseta less."

Juan hesitated for a moment.

"Buy him," whispered Pepito, eagerly; "on the honour of a mountaineer, you will want him."

Whispers now began to circulate amongst the spectators: "It is certainly he." "Who is he?" "The stranger who killed the bull."

"Buy him," again whispered Pepe, still more eagerly, as two or three of the crowd plucked him by the sleeve, and pulled him aside, curious to know who Don Juan really was.

"Oh, he is a friend of the Señor Lope, from near Almeria—a rich man—something in his line too," promptly replied Pepe.

Juan hesitated no longer; he saw that the people's curiosity was aroused, and that the sooner he escaped observation the better for his personal safety: he was not sorry, moreover, in his situation, to possess so excellent a horse. The bargain was promptly struck, and the noble animal was despatched under the escort of its late owner to the smuggler's house, the admiring crowd still following him.

Left to themselves, Juan and Pepito strolled onwards towards the ruined fort, and sat down amidst the crumbling brickwork. Both were silent for a long time, our hero occupied with the picture of his mistress standing at the moonlit window, and the little muleteer not presuming to speak until spoken to.

"By the bye," said Juan, suddenly, "do you know anything of Mateo, who is called the Miller of the Moraima?"

"Do I know whom?" almost shrieked Pepe.

"The Miller of the Moraima."

"You are jesting, Señor; every one knows him."

"Tell me what you know of him."

Pepe got up and looked cautiously round, peeping behind the broken walls to see that no one was lurking near; and coming close up to Juan, and speaking almost in a whisper, he said, "Some say that he is a demon; others, that he has a spirit in the dark Moraima that provides him with money, and turns aside all weapons, bullets and all. I don't know, for my part, what to think of all that; but this much is certain, he is as cunning as a fox, fierce and savage as a bull in the ring, rich as an old Jew, spiteful and revengeful as a gipsy; he hears everything—he knows everything; sometimes I think that the air whispers tales in his ear. Is it possible, Señor, that you don't know Mateo? There was the little red-haired arriero of San Roque, whom he shot on the Alameda for speaking lightly of him; how, in the Virgin's name, he found it out, without this spirit of his told him, nobody knows:—that 's one;" and he went on, counting on his fingers. "There was the barber he stabbed for cutting a little piece out of his chin when shaving him:—that 's two. Is it possible that your Excellency does not know him? Then there was the English officer he knocked on the head for jostling him

on his horse in a narrow path :—that 's three ; but he got the worst of that. Then there was "—

How many more atrocities he would have enumerated does not appear ; for Don Juan interrupted him suddenly by springing up and darting out of the fort.

" Esta loco por cierto," cried Pepe, jumping up, and following him.

As Lope was entering the town he met Mateo. Their greeting was apparently as friendly as usual, but a close observer might have perceived that each was playing a part.

" Well met, Lope," said Mateo ; " I was looking for you —I have some news for your ear alone. I have just heard from the coast—the Felicidad has run her cargo safe, and she is waiting for orders at the mouth of the Guadiara."

" Is that all you came to tell me, Mateo ? "

" No, I was in the Fonda de la Reyna just now, and I heard some of the officers saying that Gomez, with a considerable force, was somewhere in the neighbourhood, and that the people were leaving the villages, and flying to Algeciras and Gibraltar ; and that the authorities here were getting very jealous, and were going to examine all strangers ; and that rumours were flying about of emissaries from Don Carlos being in the town. So I came to warn you of it ; but there will be no danger of a search, nor indeed of any inquiry being made, until the bull-fight is over."

" I agree with you, Mateo. I do not think there will be any risk to-day ; so we can have our meeting ; nobody will betray *us ;* we are too well known. But thank you for your friendly warning ; I will see to it to-morrow. Still, if you could find Padre Tomaso, and bring him to the venta in about an hour, it would be as well."

" I saw him only a few minutes ago in the town ; he is in a terrible fidget ; and I really doubt whether he will come at all ; he is but a cowardly priest."

" I think you are mistaken in that, Mateo. The priests are brave enough when working for the aggrandisement of their order, or even for their own advantage ; and this is more especially their cause, and I think we must make it ours too. What say you, Mateo ? "

"It is nothing to me, Lope," said the miller carelessly, "who wins, as long as they keep at it; whilst they are fighting, and cutting one another's throats, we run our cargoes safely and easily; that is my view of it; so, for the present, I am for the weaker party. If the woman beats the man, our trade will soon be knocked on the head. So Viva Carlos Quinto, the good friend of the Contrabandistas, say I. But this Colonel Juan, what are you going to do with him? He has made himself too conspicuous, and people are beginning to inquire who he is; Diego Costa and Colonel Sandoval asked me, just now, if I knew anything about him."

"Indeed! and what did you say?"

"I told them that he was a friend of yours, come from the coast to see the fair; and hinted at another possible attraction—the Flower of the Sierras."

"What mean you, Mateo?" said Lope sharply. Mateo replied in a careless manner, "Oh, I thought it would put them on a wrong scent; they could not tell, you know, that he had not seen this rose before; he might have met her at Jaen, at Cordova, at a hundred places."

"He knows all," thought Lope. "Juan must depart at once."

Mateo watched keenly to see the effect of his words on the countenance of his friend: his friend! But not a cloud flitted over the placid calmness of his look as he said, "It was not a bad idea of yours, Mateo. Will you come in and see Frascita?"

They were now at the porch of the smuggler's house, which, it may be remembered, stood near the French gate.

At that moment the black charger was led up; and his late owner, recognising Lope, told him that he had brought the horse according to direction.

Lope motioned him to say no more, for he well knew who had bought the horse, having himself instructed Pepe to make the Colonel do so; but he thought that Mateo did not. He therefore gave the haca in charge to a servant as he said, "What do you think of him, Mateo? Have I made a good purchase? He was dear too—three hundred dollars is a long price. Will you come in?"

"No, no, not now; I have business in the town; I will try

and find the Padre, and bring him with me to the venta—hasta la vista, Lope;" and the miller hastened away.

Lope entered his house in deep thought; he paced up and down the patio hurriedly, muttering to himself, "There is not a moment to be lost—Juan must fly—but where? It would be madness for him to enter the town again; he must try and rejoin Gomez, or get on board some of the smuggling craft on the coast, and so get to Gibraltar. I and my niece can join him there, that 's true; but how to deceive Mateo; he is gone now, no doubt, to lay his plans—I can see that he is meditating something—but I will forestall him. The black horse must remain; he guesses, no doubt, who has bought him, and for what purpose, and he will have his spies at the Gaucin gate, and they will suspect something if I send the horse on. What is to be done? I cannot—I must not—let this gallant youth perish; and Frascita too—what will become of her should anything happen to her lover? I know her well, and fear for her. Still I fear that he can hardly get out of the net—something must be done—I will not delay a minute." Lope called a servant—

"Perez, are any of the men here?"

"Yes, Señor, there 's El Tuerto and Bartolo of Medina, smoking in the stable, looking at the new horse."

"Tell them to saddle two good hacas; to get ready for the road immediately, and to take their escopetas with them. But stay—send El Tuerto here."

El Tuerto, or the one-eyed, was a tall, gaunt, fierce-looking Andaluz; but he belied his appearance, for he was a good-humoured fellow enough, with a strong propensity to aguardiente, and a man of few words.

"Well, Tuerto, do you want to earn an onza?"

"Without doubt, Señor."

"Then listen to me. Take Bartolo, and two good horses, and set out at once for Gaucin. You know the small olive-grove before you come to the pass where the soldiers are?"

"Si, Señor."

"Stop there until Pepe, the arriero, and a stranger join you; give up the horses to them, see them past the soldiers, and then you can either come back or go on to Gaucin; perhaps it will be better to go on. Take your alforjas with barley for the horses,

and some food for yourselves; you may have to wait. Do you understand me?"

"Si, Señor."

"Start at once; here is something to make the road seem short."

"Ah, Señor, you know the way to do it; nothing greases the wheels like gold."

"Off with you; and if you do this well, another onza."

Fortunately for our hero there was no delay, and in half an hour the two horsemen were clear of the town and clattering over the stony road.

Having dispatched these auxiliaries on their errand, the smuggler bethought himself of his niece; accordingly, he went to seek her.

What passed between them I shall leave my readers to surmise; but in a few minutes a tall man, rather past the middle age, and a graceful female figure with her face concealed by a large dark mantilla, might have been seen issuing through the French gate, and directing their steps towards the ruined fort.

This was the apparition that had so suddenly startled and aroused our hero, and interrupted the loquacious Pepe.

I shall not attempt to portray the rapturous eagerness of Juan, nor the pretty blushes of Frascita, at this sudden and unexpected meeting, although my little guide expatiated warmly on the beauty of it; nor shall I relate what passed between the two lovers amidst those crumbling walls. It must have been sadly and sweetly interesting, no doubt, loving as these two did, to meet and part again so soon. But hope is *true* love's *true* friend, and wreathed round their young fond hearts might have been found this motto, "Hope on, hope ever."

Whilst these two were exchanging vows of eternal constancy, the kind-hearted smuggler had withdrawn outside with Pepe. As he stood there giving the arriero his final instructions, a charcoal-burner approached, and gave Lope a scrap of paper, on which was written, "It is as I told you; the Padre is a coward; he will not meet Colonel Juan until it is dusk."

"Return to your master, and say we will wait," said Lope to the messenger, whose keen eyes seemed to wander restlessly about in search of something he did not see, but expected to find, and he walked away evidently disappointed.

"This is a scheme of Mateo's," said Lope to the faithful muleteer, "to make sure of the Colonel waiting until night at least. It is now high time that he should start; he ought to be twelve hours, at the least, in advance of any pursuit. I doubt whether the authorities here have any suspicion of his being a Carlino; still Mateo is capable of any and the worst treachery now that his jealousy is aroused. My niece has had time to explain every thing; they must part: it is a pity, too, so young, so handsome, and so loving a pair; but perish he must if he remains. I can neither save him nor conceal him; his only safety is in flight to the coast, and that immediate. Are you ready to go with him, Pepe? You have always been faithful to me, my friend; will you be so now?"

"I am yours to the death, and what would I not do for such a three?" replied the little arriero earnestly. "Trust me, Señor Lope."

The smuggler turned into the ruins.

"Forgive me, Colonel," said Lope, kindly, taking the young Carlist's hand in his, "forgive me for interrupting you. It is time you should go; you have a fierce, implacable, bitter enemy, for he has discovered all; delay is dangerous, and an hour has been already lost."

"Oh, yes, dear Juan, fly, I beseech you," said the maiden, imploringly, and at the same time firmly: "oh, do not linger here; we shall soon meet again."

The young Carlist hesitated; overwhelmed, for a moment, by the idea of losing her he loved so tenderly, his senses reeled, and he leaned against the wall for support. Before he could recover himself they were gone; and yet the fragrance of a kiss rested on his lips—all that was now left to him of the Pride of the Sierras.

He started up to overtake them, but paused, and sank down, half stupified and unconscious, on the crumbling ruins; his limbs did not move; but his eye followed the graceful form of his darling mistress, until it was lost amidst the crowd; and even then it seemed to trace her, so fixed—so eager was his gaze. Thus a second time the lovers parted. Will they ever meet again?

CHAPTER V.

The Flight from Ronda—The Venta at the Mouth of the Guadiara—The Smuggling Craft—The Chase—The Escape.

READER mine—for one, I flatter myself, I shall have—were you ever in the Zoological Gardens?

Did you ever notice a queer-looking animal covered with armour, in a large wired den?

Watch him, and you will see him scuttling about, here and there, out and in, round about and round about, so fast that the eye can scarcely follow his motions.

I am afraid my tale is very like the Armadillo. But we will leave these labyrinthine wanderings, and for the present follow our hero in his flight.

Ronda! What a beautiful name it is, when it comes full, round, and soft from the mouth of a Spaniard! What a strange, romantic, wild, indescribable spot in reality! This Eagle's nest stands, as it were, on the comb of a mountain-crest, flanked on both sides by hideous rocks and awful precipices. The town is divided into two parts by a deep and yawning chasm, the sides of which are smooth, and as if polished by the hand of some mighty giant. At the bottom of this abyss, over which is thrown a mighty bridge, rush the foaming waters of the Rio Verde, which, dashing from the sierras, finds its way amidst grim chasms and over headlong precipices until it reaches the valley below, cutting the town in two, and turning, in its descent, numberless mills.

To reach the Gaucin road from where we left our hero, without passing through the town, would seem impossible to a stranger. Difficult and dangerous it is, but not altogether impracticable.

The young Carlist remained a few minutes as if bowed down by the weight of his loss. But his was an elastic and hopeful temperament; dashing, as if ashamed of his weakness, the unbidden drops from his eyes, he sprang on his feet and bade Pepe

lead the way. Leaving the plain, Pepe struck into a narrow, winding path, which seemed to end in a precipice; but by scrambling, and sliding, and jumping from rock to rock, and lowering themselves over fearful places, where the least slip would have been fatal, and at which Juan, brave as he was, could scarcely forbear from shuddering, whilst the active little mountaineer only laughed, they arrived safely amidst the broken gardens in the valley beneath the town. Around huge black rocks, over sparkling watercourses and bubbling brooks, through orange and olive groves, amidst rose beds, patches of Indian corn, pomegranates, geraniums, and stately aloes—a very chaos of gardens, the little arriero threaded his way until the valley of the river was crossed. Then, climbing up by a path as precipitous, rugged, and rocky as that by which they had descended, Juan found himself unexpectedly on the wished-for road.

It was now within an hour of noon, and although it was autumn the sun shone out with a fierce intensity. Scarcely a soul was stirring, for the Rondenians were enjoying their siesta during the midday heat.

A solitary sentinel stood gaping and gazing with a lazy, lack-lustre eye over the parapet, but he took no notice of the fugitives.

Fear was no ingredient in the disposition of our hero—he had never even known what that feeling was; yet his heart beat more freely, and the air seemed lighter, when nothing was visible save the mountain and the sky.

Busied with his own train of ideas, he followed in silence his trusty guide. "They would meet again. Gomez had kept his word, and ere long would be master of Andalucia. She would see him as a victor, not as a lurking spy." Such were the leading thoughts of his buoyant mind.

Castle after castle arose in the air and vanished away, as his thoughts dwelt upon the future. Happy prerogative of lovers! what would ye do without these aery creations of your wanton brains? Is there one among you all that hath not built some such gorgeous fabric in his waking dreams? If such there be, go crown him, Dullness, with a leaden crown, for his name is Apathy.

Briskly the two walked on for nearly two leagues under the glowing sun, yet neither spoke; Juan building his castles in the

air, and thinking of that sweet parting kiss; Pepe humming snatches of songs and smoking his cigarillo, alternately. They reached the olive-grove. Pepe whistled shrilly, startling our hero from his blissful reverie. The whistle was promptly returned, and El Tuerto and his companion issued from the shadow of the trees leading the two hacas.

They gave our fugitives this confused though welcome intelligence: a goatherd had informed them that the soldiers had been withdrawn from the pass some hours before, and that Don Carlos was coming with a large army to take Gibraltar.

Juan and his guide mounted.

Made happy with a handsome present, the two smugglers turned back towards Ronda, as their errand was done, and no soldiers were on the road.

The sun had set in a cloud of glory, and the darkness was creeping over mountain and over valley when the travellers arrived at the little open town of Gaucin.

To their great surprise this usually quiet little place was alive with men. Soldiers in all their ragged variety of Spanish uniform might be seen by the dull light, dragging guns up the steep cliff towards the old Moorish castle; Peseteros and Miguelets were cleaning and preparing their escopetas in the open street; officers were shouting; women talking and screaming; dogs barking in concert—all was confusion and uproar; cries of "Mueran los Facciosos!"—"No quarter to the dogs!" "Viva Christina!" "Viva la Constitucion!" menaces, oaths, boastings, passed from group to group, from individual to individual.

"We cannot stop here, that 's certain," said Pepe; "we must push on, though these cursed hacas are getting tired."

Juan assented, saying "I am entirely in your hands, do what you think best."

Such was the bustle, such the confusion, that very little notice was taken of our travellers.

Some of the men recognised Pepe, and spoke to him; but as it was no unusual thing for him to pass by at any hour either by day or by night, they gave him only a passing salutation, or an invitation to come in and drink a glass of aguardiente. In reality there was little or no danger; for the hubbub was so great, and the consternation, notwithstanding their boastings and prepara-

tions, so widely spread, that everybody was thinking and taking care of himself; it only wanted a real alarm to scatter them like sheep before the wolves.

The fugitives, however, dismounted, and led their jaded hacas through the long and ill-paved streets, and down the tremendous hill on which Gaucin stands.

Fortunate it was for our hero, as the sequel will show, that the alarmed state of the people had scared the travellers away from their halting-place.

At the foot of the hill, a little removed from the road, there was a venta, beautifully situated in a grove of orange-trees: lights were gleaming through the windows and from the open door; this, too, the fugitives could see was filled with wild looking soldiery.

Digging their sharp stirrup-irons into the flanks of their tired horses, they cantered sharply past.

The noise brought several of the soldiers to the door; shots were fired at random—the bullets whistled harmlessly by, and the figures of the fugitives were soon lost in the increasing gloom.

When they pulled their horses into a walk—no difficult matter, by the bye—Juan, although his situation was anything but agreeable, again breathed freely.

There is always a strong reaction of the mind when a man, however brave, has escaped from a danger that appears imminent. What warrior is not glad when the battle is over? What sailor does not rejoice when the storm is past? Does not even the huntsman feel it when he has safely surmounted some dangerous leap? But, above all, when the earth has rocked under the feet, when the mountains have been bowed down to the valleys, when the crash of falling cliffs and the rattle of the earthquake have sounded in the ear, then the moment that convulsed and heaving Nature has resumed her tranquillity, does not the blood rush circling again through the veins? does not, as it were, a new life resuscitate the fainting heart? New dangers may arise, but this is past and gone. One escape seems the pledge of future deliverances.

The night was dark, although the moon had risen, for a dense mist hung all around the horizon. The air was still, and a few

stars twinkled faintly overhead in the murky sky; there was no sound, save the splash of the horses' feet and the hoarse booming croak of the bull-frog, as Juan and his guide followed the winding track along the shallow brook amidst the dark oleanders.

Myriads of fire-flies flitted around the bushes—

"Like bright thoughts flashing o'er the gloomy soul."

Midnight had passed, and a heavy, dank fog hung damply and drearily over the Guadiara, as, leading their jaded horses after them, the fugitives approached the sea-shore.

"Hist, Señor; this way, come to me," cried Pepito; "I have found the ford; this way, this way."

Juan joined him.

Pepito now went on in his rattling manner, for his tongue was at length loosened.

"I don't think we shall have any carabineros here to-night; if there should be any, we need not fear them; they know me, and the Señor Lope pays them well, so they won't interfere with us; they will think that we are on some smuggling business—so we are, so we are, I forgot that—to smuggle your Excellency out of the country. What say you then, Señor Juan, will you try the venta? We must have something to eat; this travelling is hungry work."

"Wherever you please to go I will follow you, my trusty guide," said Juan dejectedly.

"Well, get on your horse again, Señor, and we will cross the river."

The venta stood amidst a grove of chestnut-trees, near the bank of the Guadiara. It was a long, low, one-storied building, with a large mule-shed attached to it, and a spacious stable. All the windows were strongly defended with iron bars, and the doors were of thick oak-plank, heavy, and clamped with iron. The building was divided into three compartments; the kitchen, if I may so call it, a small intermediate room for travellers to sleep in, that is to say if the jumpers and the creepers would let them, and an inner chamber which the family occupied.

Now, although it was past midnight, the door stood wide open.

Three or four huge dogs of a large lurcher breed rushed out

barking furiously, and seemed determined to oppose the entrance of the strangers. Pepito jumped off his horse and called to them, "Down, ye devils, down; don't you know me?" At the sound of his voice the dogs began to smell round him; then hushing their clamorous tongues, whined, and fawned, and jumped on him.

Patting their heads the arriero entered the venta, beckoning to Juan to keep behind him.

Before the charcoal-fire two tall, athletic young men were seated smoking.

Beside them stood a table with an earthenware jar of wine and glasses on it.

As they turned round, the arriero, on whose swarthy face and dark figure fell the dull glare from the fire, made a sign, crossing his arms in a peculiar manner.

"What! is that you, Pepecillo?" cried one, jumping up and embracing him: "I thought you were up in the sierras with the Señor Lope."

"So I was, so I was; but is all right here? I have a friend with me."

"Carajo! A friend! Who is he? Is he one of us?" said both together.

"He is a friend of the Señor Lope," promptly replied the arriero.

"He is welcome, then; bid him come in."

Juan entered, and saluted them.

One of the young men then went out, and put the tired horses in the stable, and fed them. On his return he inquired how far they had come, that the hacas were so jaded.

"Don't ask me any questions," said Pepe, laughing; "it's no use, for I won't answer them."

"But look you here, Pepecillo mio," replied the one who spoke last, "there is business on hand to-night; the stranger must take the oath. Hark ye," and he whispered in Pepe's ear, "the Felicidade is lying off the mouth of the river, and her cargo, at least a part of it, is in there," and he pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the inner room. "The women are packing it at this moment; the riders will be here presently: they won't like a stranger."

"Mira usted, mi amigo, that is the very craft we expected to find here. We want to get on board: is there a boat in the river?"

"Yes, down in the creek which runs up the marsh below. You know it; she is hid amongst the reeds."

"When does the little craft sail?"

"Not until to-morrow, if not meddled with; but they say here that that cursed Guarda Costa brig is off the coast."

"Yes, I saw her a few days ago at Marbella."

"The devil!"

"But the Carabineros?"

"They are all out of the way, all called off; have you not heard the news? Gomez, with his army of brigands, is near the Guadaranque; some say he is on it."

Juan drew near to listen: this was great news for him.

"Come, come, Cavalleros," said the other man, "enough of this. Let us drink a safe voyage back to the blessed little Felicidad; and hark ye, Pepito, if your friend is not to take the oath, let him at least pledge us in a glass of vino tinto."

So saying he filled four glasses from the jar that stood on the table, and handed one to each.

Then they all four stood up, and jingled their glasses together.

"Long live the trade," shouted he who had proposed drinking the toast.

"Vivan los contrabandistas," replied the other.

Again the four glasses were jingled together, and the two burst out into a rough wild song—

Yo qui soi contrabandista,
He tobacco y aguardiente,
Y mi muger, y mi cavallo,
Felix que soi yo.

Which may be freely translated—

I, who am a smuggler bold,
Smoke and drink, and count my gold;
I've a horse and pretty wife,
Don't I lead a jolly life?

Just as the chorus died away, the clattering of horses' hoofs on the loose stones sounded through the still night-air.

"Here they are; let us welcome the jolly fellows," cried the first speaker, jumping up. "But, no: in with you amongst the women; but, mind, no quarrelling or love-making, or we shall have a jabbering like a hen-roost with a rat in it:—in with you."

Juan and the arriero entered the inner room, where three women, two of whom were young and rather pretty, were busily employed unpacking bales of cotton and woollen stuffs, and making them up into smaller packages fit for the road.

Only one of the women took any notice of the strangers; they were well accustomed to all kinds of concealment. She was coming forward to welcome Pepito, but he stopped her with a sign.

Presently, as the wine took effect, the noise and mirth in the outer room became fast and furious.

"This will never do," whispered the arriero to Juan. "I know them: they'll be for making you take the oath presently. When the wine gets into their heads, son demonios; so let us slip out gently and try and find the boat. I know every inch of the ground, but it is very soft and treacherous; so take care, Señor, and follow me close."

There was a small door at the back of the women's apartment.

Pepe made a sign to the girl to open it: she did so, and they slipped out noiselessly. It was pitch dark.

Groping their way in silence through a tangled brake, where the stunted wild myrtle, the juniper, and the alder filled the black, moist intervals between the sand-hills, forming a dismal and unwholesome swamp, the abode of the rabbit and the red-legged partridge, and crossing, at the expense of many a severe wetting, sundry muddy and stinking ditches, Juan and his guide reached the creek.

After a lengthened search, during which the arriero did not mutter less than a hundred oaths, they succeeded in finding the boat. There were no oars.

At that moment, gleaming faintly over the sand-hills, a light far out to seaward showed itself for an instant. A low report, as of a distant gun, followed.

"Carajo!" exclaimed Pepito; "that must be the Guarda Costa signalling. It is evident we cannot stay here, and the Felicidad will be off."

"If we can but get the boat out into the river, she will drop down to the sea with the current," said Juan.

"It is evident, Señor," replied Pepe impatiently, "that you don't know this stupid river: there is only a narrow channel where even a light boat can float; without oars we should ground. Besides, the mouth is like a mill-race, and not much wider; and then there is a bar. Carajo! What is to be done?"

As the arriero moved about impatiently, he struck his foot against some wooden object. "Ha, ha! What a ninny I was to suppose they would leave them in her!" exclaimed Pepito joyously; "here they are, here they are."

Juan and his guide got in, and paddling quietly down the creek reached the river, which here spreads itself over its shallow bed to a width of nearly two hundred yards. As they approached the mouth it gradually narrowed, the sand rising high on both sides until the water fell like a sluice.

The boat, steered by a skilful hand, shot rapidly through the opening, and reached in safety the broken water outside.

Nothing could be heard but the gentle splash of the little waves on the smooth and sandy beach, except the shrill scream of the gulls, the cry of the plover, and the whistle of the sand-larks, as they flew off startled from their feeding-place.

"Rest a moment, Señor," said Pepe, when they had crossed the bar, as he leaned over the gunwale of the boat and looked stedfastly along the surface of the water. "I don't see her yet, but she ought to be hereabouts: I must try the signal, though I don't like it. But here goes."

Taking his knife from his sash and a flint from his pouch, and stooping down till his hands were nearly level with the surface of the water, he struck several sharp, bright sparks from the flint.

"Look out, Señor."

Presently, right ahead, a few dancing lights like the glimmerings of the fireflies appeared for a second through the calm, dark atmosphere.

"That 's her at last," cried Pepito joyously. "Give way, Señor."

Presently the dim outline of a felucca rose as if out of the sea, heaving gracefully to the gentle swell, and a voice came over the calm water.

"Quien es?"

"Gibraltar," promptly answered the arriero.

"Y pues?"

"La Felicidad."

"All right," said the voice from the felucca; "come on board."

"Stay a moment, Señor: just hold on while I speak to the captain," said the arriero, as he sprang into the felucca. In a few minutes he returned.

"It 's all right, Señor; you may come on board. I explained your situation to the captain, adding that you were a friend of the Señor Lope—his name is a passport. 'Ah,' said he, 'this cavallero is your friend, and is unfortunate; that is quite enough for me, I don't want to hear any more.' Between us two, Señor Juan, I think el capitan hates the Christinos, although he is no Spaniard."

As Juan stepped on board he was kindly welcomed by the captain of the smuggling craft. "You are running a great risk, Señor," said the Genoese. "You have come on board at an unlucky time: I cannot sail until to-morrow, and there is a Queen's vessel off, and I fancy she is on the look-out for us. You see it is calm now—we are embayed; and though the sweet little vessel is as swift as a bird, she may cut us off or disable us; and then seven years' at least hard labour in the works of Ceuta —curses on them!"

"And if I stay on shore it is death, perhaps the death of a dog," said Juan bitterly.

"Well, well," replied the captain kindly, "don't be cast down, Señor; we will give them the slip yet: I've had many a touch and go escape in my time, and I'm twenty years older than you, so be easy; you have not yet run your time out. But you are cold and wet; come below."

Indeed our hero, though with a frame and a constitution of iron, was nearly worn out with hunger, cold, wet, and fatigue; so that after refreshing himself, notwithstanding his dangerous and unpleasant situation, and harassing thoughts, he slept long and soundly.

Juan was awoke by the report of a cannon. When he went on deck the Felicidad was still at anchor. A thick white veil

of mist or fog rested on the sea as far as the eye could reach; but over the land and overhead the sky was clear and blue, a few fleecy clouds passing at intervals towards the east. Presently the report of another gun boomed through the fog to seaward.

The captain was on deck watching the sky intently. In a few minutes he called to his mate and said, "Get the anchor up at once, I cannot wait any longer; we shall have the west wind soon, and the fog will lift: in with it, but with as little noise as possible."

Then turning to Juan he said, "Good morning, Señor; it is as I feared; the wind is coming off the land, and it will be all clear directly. The Guarda Costa has kept her station during the night, and I have no hesitation in saying that it will be touch and go with us; so if you like to land again"—

"No, no," answered Juan, "anything but that. I would sooner work all my life in chains, or be blown up with you into a thousand pieces, than stand the chance of being shot like a dog, with that traitor Mateo looking on." The Genoese was startled at his vehemence, but added kindly, "Well, well, Cavallero, I do not give in without a struggle, you may depend upon it. These fellows have an old grudge against me. I have foiled them so often, and I should not like to fall into their hands: so I 'll e'en go and get everything ready for a run."

Juan, left to himself, anxiously watched the appearance of the changing skies, as the captain had done. Presently he heard the splash of oars—a boat dashed through the opening and came alongside, and Pepe jumped on board: the boat put off again immediately.

He came up to Juan and said in his quick, rattling way, "You are in luck, Señor, for once in a way, it seems. We just got out of that in the nick of time. I went back to the venta in the boat after you had turned in, on a little business of my own. I slipped in by the little door; one of the girls, the pretty one you saw, bade me hold my tongue, pointing with her finger to the next room. She told me that there were seven or eight Carabineros inside. It seems that they were in search of you, for she heard them mention your name, and 'faccioso' and 'muerte' and other words of that sort: so I told her—she is a sweetheart of mine—to try and get one of her brothers away to take me off

again, and bring the boat back; for, Señor Juan, I would not think of deserting you—and here I am."

Juan thanked him.

"No thanks, Señor; next to the famous Lope and his charming niece, you have my esteem. What was I saying? Oh, leave a woman alone to manage a delicate affair, but don't ask her questions. I had to wait; but, at all events, here I am. It seems, however," added the arriero, earnestly, "that they have all got a hint of your being on board the Felicidad: still, I cannot understand how they know it."

"It is Mateo's work; but I will repay him for it yet, if I escape," said Juan, savagely.

By this time the anchor of the smuggling craft was weighed, and the huge lateen sail loosened, and all ready to hoist. The men manned the oars, and the sharp little vessel glided ahead through the smooth water.

A light and gentle air began to creep off the land.

The huge yard was promptly swayed aloft, and the sail set.

Presently the fog rolled upwards like a semi-transparent white curtain from the surface of the sea, and vanished in the air. The bright Mediterranean suddenly appeared glowing in the sun's rays; and there, about three miles distant, lay the gun-brig, with her white glistening sails still idly flapping against the masts.

The scene was truly beautiful.

At the northern extremity, or horn of the bay, the Sierra Vermeja, rising abruptly from the sea, and trending away towards Malaga, shone in the sunlight with a bright vermilion flame. The smooth and placid sea seemed on fire; whilst on its glassy bosom, at various intervals and distances, the forms of large vessels reposed still and motionless as if painted on canvas; every mast, every sail, every rope, was reflected in the polished mirror of that lovely sea. To the south the vast towering rock of old Calpe arose in mighty grandeur, its summit still crowned with a wreath of mist. Landward were frowning cliffs and broken rocks rising over the sandy beach, and mingled with bright green verdure and purple heath. And here and there a white round tower stood as a watchman on the heights. Beneath these several dusky figures could now be discerned moving busily to and fro; these were the Carabineros, attracted by the firing.

"You see those men moving about there," said the captain to Juan, pointing to the shore; "that is no doubt what the Guarda Costa was signalling for: but there must be something out of the way, or they would not have taken even the trouble to show themselves."

"It seems," said Juan, "that I am fated to bring trouble now on all I have any dealings with."

"Never mind about that, Señor, but look at the brig yonder. See, she has got the wind at last—there, her sails fill—she will no doubt edge in upon us and drive us under the fire of the men on shore, or force us on the rocks; but depend upon it," added he, squeezing Juan's hand in his, "I am not the man to give it up easily."

The Felicidad now began to move rapidly through the water, creeping along the shore. The sea was perfectly smooth, only rippled by the freshening west wind that came sweeping down the ravines and gullies, bearing on its wings the perfume of the flowers.

The Guarda Costa and the Felicidad were both on the same tack, with their heads nearly to the southward; the former lying rather closer to the wind, and edging in shore to lessen her distance; the latter sneaking along about a quarter of a mile from the beach, but going freer, and consequently faster, through the water.

The Genoese took off his broad-leafed hat, and crushing it between his hands, cried out, in an excited state, "All now depends on what practice she makes with her popguns. The water shoals gradually, and they are too deep to come very near. I don't think they like or will try close quarters with their boats; so, if they don't succeed in winging us, we shall give them the slip yet."

"I cannot see how it is possible?" said Juan, inquiringly.

"Oh, easily enough: if we once get inside the English lines, I'll beach her if we have to swim for it. They dare not take us then; the redcoats wo'n't let them."

The Guarda Costa edged in nearer and nearer the shore; and although she did not sail so fast, having less distance to go, she still kept her relative position. She was soon within a mile of the gallant little smuggling craft.

"Look out for yourselves, men," cried the Genoese, sharply;

"I see her foresail lift: under hatchways all of you, but the mate and myself."

Five jets of flame, five white puffs of smoke, broke suddenly from the side of the brig, and the shot came hissing and ricochetting along the smooth surface of the water; but all fell short or wide, whilst the echo reverberated in low murmurs from the distant hills. "Bah!" said the captain, contemptuously, shrugging his shoulders.

Presently a running, spattering fire of musketry came from off the shore; yet, although the bullets whizzed and sung over their heads and around them, not a man or rope was hit. "Keep your powder and balls, you fools, for the Carlists," growled the captain.

Shot after shot now came from the gun-brig, which was still nearing the Felicidad.

"A little better that," remarked the captain, as a round shot went hissing nearly over their heads, and cutting a round hole in the small triangular sail that served as a mizen. Still no damage of consequence was done.

As the hills became lower and the ground more open, the wind increased in force and steadiness.

The rapidity with which the sweet little craft now foamed through the rippling waters soon distanced the Carabineros on shore, with the exception of a few horsemen, who still kept up an irregular and unsuccessful fire.

But the water deepened, and the brig still edged in upon them nearer and nearer. "Luff, you may," said the captain to the mate, who was steering. "We must shoal our water more; never mind those popguns from the land."

Still they could not shake off the gun-brig, which kept up an incessant fire from her guns.

But the Felicidad seemed appropriately named—she appeared to bear a charmed life; for with the exception of the shot through her mizen, not another ball had struck her, though several had pitched into the sea so close as to throw the spray on to her low deck.

"Heave the gun overboard, we shall draw less water without it, and she will feel all the livelier when it is gone. It 's no use with this big one; we must trust to our heels."

The men promptly obeyed the order, and with a heavy splash the twelve-pounder sank beneath the waves.

The chace had now lasted upwards of an hour and a half, and the Felicidad was within three miles of the English lines, dashing swiftly on.

Suddenly the Guarda Costa ceased firing. The water had shallowed again, and she was obliged to stand off a little.

"We shall do it yet," cried the captain in extasy, rubbing his hands quickly together; "look over the sand-hills yonder, towards the rock, Señor; do you see those dark lines—how steady they move? Those are the picquets from the garrison. Ah, those are the boys for me."

Suddenly a cry from the mate caused the Genoese to turn his eyes to the brig—he turned pale.

Several dark little balls were being run up to the mast-heads; then they unfolded to the breeze, and showed small triangular flags of different colours.

"What the devil is she signalling for now?" cried the captain, his exulting tone all gone.

"I am afraid," replied the mate, "that it must be to the other Guarda Costa from Algeciras; she must have heard the firing, and will cut us off. There she is, by all the saints in the calendar," added he, as a sneaking, low, lateen-rigged vessel appeared suddenly, rounding the north-eastern end of the rock.

"It is she," muttered the captain, with a deep oath; "we are doomed at last: what a fool I was to throw the gun overboard!"

For a moment the Genoese appeared to have given up all hopes of escape in utter dejection, but suddenly rousing himself, he said, "Who knows what guns she carries?"

"I know," replied the mate; "only one traversing twelve-pounder forward."

"I'll do it, if she blows us out of the water; better that than be taken," muttered the captain. "What say you, my men; shall we give the sweet little craft up?"

"No, no," cried the crew, one and all; "she is in your hands; do what you like."

Their escape, however, seemed utterly hopeless: if they ran out to sea, it was into the jaws of the gun-brig; if they stood on,

it was only to meet the armed felucca; if they ran on shore, they could hardly escape the Carabineros.

The captain took the helm. His teeth were clenched, his brow contracted, his eye was set, and he grasped the tiller with an iron grasp.

He stood right on.

A storm of bullets from the land fell around, over and under him. The gun-brig still fired at intervals, but with the same bad aim. The lateen craft came boldly down straight on towards the Felicidad, as if she would run her on board.

The captain steered as if he meant to pass to windward of the felucca; and so they came down on one another rapidly. When about a hundred yards off, the felucca luffed up into the wind, and shivered her sail as if to throw herself right across the bows of the smuggler, and hailed her to surrender.

No answer was given.

Her gun, loaded with grape, was then fired; but they had checked her way too soon; the muzzle was depressed too much; and the whole charge struck the water close under the little bowsprit of the Felicidad. They were now nearly touching.

"Vaya usted con Dios!" shouted the Genoese, as he put the helm suddenly up, and at the same moment slacked off the main sheet. The quick little vessel, answering like lightning to her helm, shot by to leeward within twenty yards of the felucca; and before her enemy was wore round, the gallant smuggler had increased her distance, and was well ahead of her pursuer.

Several vessels that were backstrapped (as it is called) in the Bay behind the rock had stood in, probably to see the fun, and between two large ships the Genoese steered the Felicidad, thus avoiding the fire of the gun-brig.

Suddenly, as if recovering from her previous confusion and stupidity, the felucca again hauled her wind to cut off the smuggling craft from Gibraltar; and regardless of the neutral vessels, fired on, but with as little success as before.

Like a mountain-hare before the greyhounds the Felicidad dashed on; but the felucca seemed to gain on her as the wind came in powerful gusts over the smooth plain of the Neutral-ground. But it was now too late.

Suddenly by a mighty third power the tables were turned—the giant spoke and bade the contest cease.

For from the towering rock a twenty-four pound shot came hissing over the felucca, and plunged into the sea to leeward, throwing up the water in a sheet of foam.

The echo rolled like thunder reverberating from cliff to cliff; and ere the sound had died away the fortunate Felicidad was safe from further pursuit under the shelter of her mighty protector.

Sneaking along under the shadow of those vast heights, the smuggling craft, with an English ensign hoisted, as if in derision of her pursuers, rounded Europa Point, and was soon anchored safely in the Bay.

CHAPTER VI.

The Gipsy Horsedealer and the Savage Miller—The Hell—Los Hermanos de Lamala—The terms are agreed upon—The Fonda de la Reyna and its Host.

HAVING left our hero and his faithful guide safe under the guns of the redoubtable fortress, we must retrace our steps over the stony mountain-road, and hasten back to Ronda.

Scarcely had the horsedealer quitted the smuggler's house, with a light step and heavy purse, when he felt a tap on the shoulder.

Mechanically his hand sought the handle of his long knife.

Turning round, he saw Mateo.

He drew his hand away as if the knife had burnt him.

"Dost thou know me, friend?" said the miller, fixing his basilisk eyes on the horsedealer's countenance.

"I beg your pardon, Señor Mateo," said the other, trembling; "I did not know who touched me; but when I have money about me, the hand goes to the knife naturally."

"I would speak with you alone: follow me."

The horsedealer obeyed; but his knees shook, and his teeth chattered, as he thought of his dollars, and the awful character of him he followed, his mind naturally enough coupling the two together. But he was mistaken.

They reached the end of the Alameda; and the miller, seating himself on the same bench which he had occupied the evening before, signed to the horsedealer to sit by him.

Then, fixing his eye on the shifting and wavering countenance of the other, he said, in a low but fierce voice—

"Now listen to me: I know you; you are a gipsy."

The horsedealer started, and made a gesture of denial.

"Do not deny it; that is useless."

"No, by the blessed Virgin!"

"Psha! gipsy or Christian, you stole that horse."

"But, Señor"—

"Silence! and listen to what I say, and answer my questions

simply—do you hear?—and truly: gold if you do, a prison if you do not. Dost thou not detest our race?"

"It is our creed."

"What wouldst thou do to a rival who robs you of your mistress?"

"I wear a knife."

"Dost thou love gold?"

"I am a gipsy."

"And hatest a prison?"

"I am a gipsy."

"Dost thou love a good horse?"

"Next to my mistress."

"Wouldst thou regain what thou hast stolen and sold, without paying the price back?"

"It is the fashion of the Calori."

"Are you to be trusted?"

"Pay me well."

"You shall wreak your hatred on our race; you shall have gold, and the noble black horse again, if you will do my bidding. But beware! my arm is long, and the spirit whispers in my ear the name of all who play me false. Now, answer me again: Wouldst thou know him again who bought your horse?"

"What! the handsome stranger?"

"Curses on him! yes, that is the man."

"'T is half a pity, too; so young, so handsome, and so open-handed!"

"Psha! are you a driveller? It is a safe venture; he is a Carlino; he would restore the Inquisition; more reason for hatred, to a gipsy!"

"Why not denounce him?"

"Silence! What is that to thee? But know this: if a syllable—a single syllable is breathed of me or any of my people having any concern in this, you die! There must be four of you; for, he may not be alone; at least he will have one man with him as a guide."

"And they who accompany him?"—

"Must be spared, if possible. Have you any companions who can be trusted?"

"Yes; there are the three brothers from Lamala, who robbed

the Englishmen near Loxa; they are only rateros; but they will turn their hand to anything, if well paid."

"Can you find them now?"

"Yes; but they will not stir for me, until after the bull-fights, but for you."

"Fool! they will know me," interrupted the miller, savagely.

"Pardon me, Señor; you can speak to them without being seen; they are strangers, and will not know your voice if there should be occasion for you to speak; I will vouch for you."

"You!" said Mateo, with a contemptuous sneer; "you vouch for me? Ha, ha! the gipsy vouches for the Christian! But, lead on, thou spawn of hell! if there be aught of trickery or deception in thy dealings with me, thy life-blood shall answer for it."

So saying, Mateo rose from his seat.

Could the miller have seen the expression of the gipsy's countenance at that moment, where hatred, revenge, and evil passions were struggling for mastery with cupidity and cowardly fear,—

"Letting I dare not wait upon I would,"—

he might have changed his purpose.

Little did that man of blood imagine that his designs had been foreseen, and his plans already anticipated; that from the spot he had that moment quitted, within a short hour his hated and successful rival might have been seen threading his way through the broken gardens, almost beneath his very feet.

He went to seek his destruction, and he left him free.

The horsedealer led the way along the Alameda, across the bridge, into the market-place: then turning down a narrow, steep, and ill-paved street, he stopped opposite to a large shed, full of mules and borricos. At one end of this was a door which opened into a dark and filthy stable; this, too, was full of horses, all huddled together.

"This is the place, Señor," said the gipsy: "will it please you to enter?"

"I see nothing," said Mateo, impatiently, "but a filthy stable."

They entered, however, and the gipsy, closing the door after him, and speaking to the hacas to keep them quiet, crept along

behind them to the farther end of the stable; the miller following him in silence, with his hand on his knife.

The gipsy pushed open a small door which opened inwards into a narrow room, the floor of which was strewn with sacks of barley, saddles, alforjas, and other horse-trappings. No light entered this dismal hole, except what stole in through the chinks of the door that opened into the mule-shed, and that was barely sufficient to make the darkness visible. Stepping over the barley-sacks, the horsedealer showed Mateo a small iron grating let into the wall, and concealed by bridles and other horse-gear hanging down before it. The bars were close together, and crossed each other from corner to corner. It was like the grating at a convent, only smaller, and no light shone through the interstices; in fact it appeared an old window now built up.

Suddenly the door shut to, apparently of its own accord, and all was utter darkness.

Mateo's suspicious disposition was immediately aroused, and he turned suddenly round to seize the gipsy, but he had disappeared. He groped about, stumbling as he did so over the saddles, but in vain. He tried the door; it was fastened, and there was nothing to pull it open with. Had the horse-dealer dared to play him false? His faithful charcoal-burner was outside—that he felt assured of, for he had seen him following them through the market-place. Should he call out? No: he would wait. As these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, Mateo heard a slight noise, as if of something drawn gently over a smooth surface. A gleam of yellow light darted through the grating, and a villainous smell of garlic and tobacco followed, mingled with a sound of muttering voices and obscene oaths. The miller could see between the bars of the grating the contents of the horrible den.

A solitary flaring candle stood on a table covered with a cloth which had once been green; but it was now so begrimed with dirt and grease, that only here and there the original colour peeped out, like grass on a muck-heap. A pack of cards, even filthier and greasier than the cloth, lay scattered about the table. The floor, walls, and ceiling were as black as age, smoke, and dirt could make them.

There was one stool near the table, and a rickety bench stood along the wall, but the only occupants of these were some small

glasses, flanking a large green earthenware jar, which probably contained that horrid compound, aguardiente flavoured with aniseed.

The room was lofty, though small, and there was apparently no mode of ingress or egress; and the only means of ventilation seemed to be the grating through which he surveyed this pandemonium.

The miller rubbed his eyes with astonishment, and muttered a suppressed oath. He could not be mistaken. There, sure enough, was the gipsy standing amidst a group of four ferocious-looking ruffians, and speaking to them earnestly and with much gesticulation in an unknown language.

Three of these suspicious-looking gentlemen were dressed exactly alike; in coarse brown serge jackets, with the cuffs, points of the elbows, and small of the back, slashed with pieces of gaudily coloured cloth. Short trowsers of the same stuff, and edged with blue, reached only to a little below the knee. A broad red coarse woollen sash was wound in many broad folds round their waists. Soiled botines and untanned leather shoes completed their costume. But, strange to say, although the rest of their dress was filthily dirty, their linen was white and clean.

Their forms were short, thickset, and very muscular. Their dark and ferocious faces were shaded with huge black whiskers, and their coarse hair fell in long elf-locks from beneath their conical hats. It was no difficult matter to see that they were brothers, and easier still to imagine that they would not scruple to commit any atrocities if paid for.

The fourth personage was even more remarkable for the savage and cunning expression of his features. But as he has nothing to do with my story further than being the proprietor of this hellish abode, and banker at the Monté table, I shall not enter into any detail, merely remarking that he was smoking his paper cigar apparently in a contented mood; and no wonder, for he had just plundered the three rateros of their last peseta.

For some minutes they all talked together, and their oaths and filthy language, although in strict keeping with the place, grated harshly even on the miller's ear; so we will not offend our more delicate reader with them.

"Carajo, No! I tell you," said one, in Spanish, turning away

to light his cigarillo at the candle; "I for one will not move until the last bull is killed and drawn out."

"Nor I," said another; "I have bet a hard dollar that the green ribands kill more horses than the pink. I must stay and see it out."

"Nonsense!" said the horse-dealer impatiently; "would you lose a chance like this? throw away fifty pesos duros a-piece for a bull-fight that you can see at any time? Nonsense! Get them first, and then you can go, sit in the shade, and bet away."

"He is right," said the third; "curses on the cards! I have not a peseta left to pay even for a seat in the sun."

"Besides," continued the gipsy, "it is a safe and easy business; no trouble in life to men like you."

"I tell you I will not go," said the first speaker sullenly. "The bulls came in last night like a whirlwind. They will fight like devils to-day."

"And who will pay my bets, or receive them if I win?" said the second.

"You have not a peseta between you," said the horse-dealer, exchanging a rapid glance with the banker.

"José will lend us some," cried all three.

"Not a real; not a single ochavo," said the keeper of the hell. "You are a parcel of fools. Go and earn some."

"He is right," said the third: "we must have money."

"I will tell you something that will make you go," continued the gipsy. "The Englishmen you robbed are here, and they will be at the bull-ring; what will happen then?" (This was a lie, but it suited his purpose.)

"Carajo!" exclaimed all three, in different keys.

There was a pause, and then a whispering together.

"Who is he that wants the job done?" inquired one.

"That is what we want to know," said another.

"They are right," said the third. "And what are we to get for it?"

"He is rich enough to pay you well; that is enough for you to know. You will do it?"

"The terms, let us hear the terms," cried the three in chorus.

"Listen, now, all of you, and José shall be witness: fifty dollars a-piece; all that is on him, and they say he has hundreds

in his sash (this was true enough, although the gipsy knew nothing about it, yet the lie, he thought, would tell; nor did he say anything about the black horse, for that he reserved for himself as his peculiar booty): now will you do it? Speak out like men, and don't shilly-shally any longer about it. Come; say Yes at once."

The three robbers consulted for a moment; then, all speaking together, they cried out "Yes! yes! yes! we will! we will! we will. The oath! the oath! the oath!"

The miller heard no more, for something slid rapidly over the grating, and he was again left in total darkness.

Five minutes passed away, and doubts began to arise again in Mateo's mind concerning the gipsy's faith. He could hear nothing but the deadened sound of the horses champing and moving about.

"I am here, Señor," said a voice close beside him; and at the same moment the door opened, apparently of itself.

"Are you content with me now?" continued the gipsy, in a cringing manner. "Have I done well?"

"Don't stand jabbering there, but get out of this infernal hole," said the miller, savagely. "Pah, I am half stifled with the smells of this cursed den—it will take a whole bottle of Tinto to wash my throat out! Out with you, gitano, conjurer, horse-dealer, robber—whatever you call yourself!"

Again that strange expression passed like the shadow of a cloud over the gipsy's countenance—again his cunning eyes gleamed with a sudden fire; but when the light of the glowing day, which penetrated even to that narrow street, fell on his swarthy features, no trace was left of angry passions—on the contrary, his manner was servile and fawning, like that of a well-flogged hound.

Before they quitted the shelter of the stable the miller's keen eye glanced up and down the street. A charcoal-burner of short stature was sauntering along towards them with a lazy step, smoking his cigarito, and not another soul was visible. The miller beckoned to him, and when he was close by his side whispered in his ear: "Trusty one, in ten minutes at the Fonda de la Reyna: I suspect him—do not lose sight of him for one moment. You are the mastiff; watch: if he runs rusty, bite."

And without deigning to say another word to the horse-dealer,

Mateo walked away towards the market-place, leaving the gipsy and the charcoal-burner face to face; and a pretty pair of babes they were.

It would be impossible to give in readable English the conversation which passed between these two worthies; for of all slang the Spanish is the most untranslatable, and unfit for decent ears.

As the horse-dealer had no intention of levanting, at least for the present, he thought he might as well ingratiate himself with his new companion by treating him to an olla and a bottle of Malaga; to which the charcoal-burner, as it was not contrary to his instructions, readily consented. So they adjourned to a wine-shop in the market-place.

The Fonda de la Reyna was the most frequented, if not the most respectable, in the town.

It had a neveria, where you might obtain that most delicious beverage, agraz (the unfermented juice of the unripe grape); this iced, and qualified with a little spirit, forms a nectareous, but I believe unwholesome, drink. The salon was a large marble-paved room, the ceiling supported by numberless small pilasters of dark green marble. In this cool retreat you might smoke and drink, play at dominoes, or rattle the balls about on a noisy billiard-table, with pallillos in the centre and bells in the pockets.

There of a morning might be seen some of the most famous toreros; the accomplished Montes and his brother-in-law El Barbiere, the stalwarth Pinto, and the undaunted Manseca.

There also resorted the flower of the contrabandistas, the heads of the police, and the officers of the garrison; a strange mixture, though all in perfect keeping with the state of Spain.

When the miller entered, the principal topics under discussion amidst this motley group were the relative merits of the different breeds of bulls (the Salamancan, the Tarifan, the Widow's having each its strenuous supporter), the stranger, and the Carlists.

The host of this remarkable inn was a notorious smuggler; and it was surmised, although people were too prudent to declare it openly, that he was engaged in even a more lawless pursuit. He was playing at billiards when the miller entered. A glance passed between them, unnoticed by the lookers-on. The game was soon lost.

"What can I do for you, Señor Mateo?" said the host.

"Have you any news from the coast?"

"Si, si, it is all right; the Felicidad has run her cargo safe."

"So I heard," replied the miller, impatiently.

"What will you take?" said el amo, significantly, seeing Mateo's impatience.

"Have you a private room? I expect somebody here directly, and I want to speak to you before they come."

"Come this way then, Señor Mateo: a glass of my old Val de Peñas will do you no harm. It is as bright as a ruby, and as fragrant as your mistress's breath."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mateo, savagely; the words of the innkeeper kindling anew the fire in his breast, like dry cedar-chips thrown on a smouldering wood-fire.

The host saw that he had unwittingly touched a tender spot, and wisely said no more, but led the way into a small private room, and placing a bottle of that glorious wine on the table, with a couple of glasses, he waited for the miller to speak.

"You know Lope de la Vega?" said Mateo, abruptly.

"Yes: who does not?"

"You have dealings with him?"

"Yes, a bale of tobacco, or so."

"He is playing me false."

"Is it possible? I thought he was as true as steel."

"Ay, true to himself, not to me. Curses light on the traitor! He must be got out of the way for a short time."

"That will be a difficult job."

"It must be done, however. Can you not devise some plan?"

"I, Señor?"

"Yes, you; cannot you forge some lie, coin some tale, or"—

"The Señor Lope!" cried the host in amazement, understanding the diabolical gleam of the miller's eye: "no, no, that will be too dangerous; he has too many friends here. The people all love him; smugglers, bull-fighters, robbers, carabineros—even gipsies doat on him."

"Nay, nay, I meant not that—it would not suit my purpose now; it is only for a day or two."

"Lope is kind-hearted; can you not work some way or another

on his feelings? May there not be some vessel seized, some dear friend of his taken—yourself, for instance?"

"By the spirit of the Moraima, that is the very thing!—what a fool I was not to think of that myself! Lope was right; I am not so cunning as he is. Fill me another glass of your ruby wine, my jolly host. I drink a health to your idea. Lure the fox away with carrion—send him to save a dead man—ha, ha! excellent, excellent!"

The innkeeper stared, for naturally enough the train of ideas that was working in Mateo's brain was utterly incomprehensible to him, even with the help of the words spoken. He saw that there was some plot, but dared not ask for an explanation, for, like the gipsy, he was afraid of the ferocious miller when in his presence.

"Yes," continued Mateo, speaking as if to himself, "lure the old bird away, the young one is caught easily enough: but let us to business; have you writing materials?"

The innkeeper went to fetch them.

Whilst he was gone Mateo drank glass after glass of the rich and generous wine as he thus communed with himself, speaking aloud:—

"It cannot fail; Frascita is mine, mine. Yet, perhaps, I am but a jealous fool, and she does not really love this stranger. No, no; those tears, that scream, that moonlight meeting, those flowers. No: may the fire of hell scorch his marrow!—she loves him. Beware, beware, Frascita; love and hate go hand in hand, and revenge follows. Thus will I sweep my enemies away, thus will I drink their blood like wine, and dash them to pieces, and crush them beneath my feet—thus—thus:" and he suited the action to the words.

"He quaffed off the liquor, and he threw down the cup,"

and ground it under his heel.

Presently the host returned, but not alone, for the gipsy and the charcoal-burner were with him. The liberal potations of aguardiente that the horse-dealer had imbibed during the last ten minutes had given him what is generally called "Dutch courage," and he actually stood in the presence of the miller without trembling. Mateo was in a glorious humour; he bade the host

bring another bottle, made the gipsy and the charcoal-burner sit down, and filled their glasses. He then wrote the note mentioned in the fourth chapter, and dispatched his trusty envoy to deliver it to Lope, and to watch what the young Carlist was doing: if satisfied that no movement was contemplated, Manolo was to return, and see the four robbers depart on their errand.

This done over the mantling bowl in a gay and laughing tone, the fierce miller proceeded to give the gipsy his final instructions.

About five leagues from Ronda, on the Gaucin road, there is a long and gloomy defile where the night-hawk flits about even in the day-time. As the traveller emerges from this, the mountain path, sweeping round a deep hollow, presents a singular spectacle. Huge masses of dark rocks, pinnacled like castle turrets, tower above him, whilst below there yawns a deep and abrupt precipice. A solitary aloe, with its stiff and prickly leaves, stands as a sentinel at the end of this dreary pass.

There the horse-dealer and his colleagues were to await their intended victim. If he came alone, no fire-arms were to be used; the deadly knife was to do the work: otherwise the gipsy was to use his own discretion.

Filling a bumper of the generous wine, the miller drank success to the enterprise, and the gipsy departed on his errand.

Satisfied with what he had done, and elated with the wine he had drunk, Mateo sought his own house to enjoy a comfortable siesta, and refresh himself during the heat of the day for the bull-fight in the evening, little imagining that his intended victim was already beyond his reach.

The miller had already committed two great errors in playing his game: he had finessed too much with a vastly superior player, and shown his cards to too many people.

Scarcely had he left the fonda when another man left it in the same direction that the charcoal-burner had taken.

Manolo departed on his errand, and, as we have related, gave Lope the note at the ruined fort, and there he was foiled.

As he returned towards the fonda, he sauntered into the court-yard of Lope's stables, as if to look at and admire Bavieca (for so we will name the black horse), but, in reality, to obtain any

information he could from the smugglers who might be loitering about.

There was no bustle or sign of anything stirring. Several men were lying on the straw wrapt in their cloaks, with their heads pillowed on saddles, asleep or smoking.

He peeped with his prying, cunning eyes into the stable; Bavieca was there, quietly munching his barley, and flapping the flies away with his long bushy tail.

Manolo was soon satisfied that no immediate flight was contemplated, although his mind was full of that species of low cunning that suspects everything, and which was so invaluable to his fierce employer. He was to Mateo what the pilot-fish is to the shark, the jackal to the lion; at least, if we may believe those pretty tales that are written about these animals.

Quitting the yard, Manolo threw himself at full length on one of the stone benches under the dark archway which opened into the street from the patio of the smuggler's house, and lay there quietly as if asleep. For nearly half an hour no one came; at length his patience was rewarded, for a tall figure whom he easily recognised, and a female sobbing audibly, entered. Coming out of the bright glare into the deep shadow of the arch, they passed into the court without noticing him; he waited some time longer, but no others came. This puzzled Manolo. It was evident enough that the smuggler's niece had accompanied him to the ruined fort, and that they had gone there for some purpose; the Carlist must have been there too, concealed amongst the broken walls. But what had now become of this stranger? Like a baffled hound the ruffian had lost the scent, and to regain it he started up, and was about to leave the shelter of the archway, when he heard footsteps coming in the opposite direction, and the host of the Fonda de la Reyna appeared in the broad daylight.

He, too, passed the charcoal-burner, apparently without seeing him, and entered the house.

Another half-hour went by, and no one quitted it.

"There is treachery somewhere," muttered Manolo, as he darted rapidly up the street, and went straight to the fonda.

Mateo was gone, the gipsy was gone, and there was the host playing at billiards just as if nothing had happened; he had just made a carambole, and knocked down three or four pallillos; but

his own ball rolled slowly on into a pocket, and the little bell tinkled.

"Ha, ha!" said he, laughing, and as if he had not seen Manolo; "that was a capital stroke and well intended, but I am caught in my own trap."

"Carajo!" exclaimed the astonished Trusty; "I thought I saw you in the street just now, Señor amo."

"Ha, ha!" replied mine host, still laughing, "is that you, my worthy? That Val de Peñas has a wonderful effect upon the eyes; it gives people a double sight: here is a proof of it."

"Psha!" exclaimed Manolo impatiently; "do you take me for a child?"

"By no means, my friend; you have, no doubt, cut your wise teeth, but old wine plays strange pranks."

"Mateo shall know of this," hissed the charcoal-burner between his teeth.

"Of what? Of my losing a grand stroke?"

"A thousand devils, no; but of your being a traitor."

"Go, and take a siesta, Manolo: never go out in the sun when you drink; it deranges the brain."

With a horrid imprecation the charcoal-burner rushed out of the fonda.

The host quietly resumed his game.

CHAPTER VII.

The Charcoal-Burner is foiled—The Uncle and the Niece—The Bull-Ring—Lope and Frascita leave their Mountain Home—The Aloe is reached—The Death of the Smuggler—Frascita! What will become of her?

MANOLO, in a furious rage, went straight to his employer's house. Mateo was asleep, and no one dared arouse the dormant lion before he was thoroughly refreshed, not even his favourite charcoal-burner.

Excited and baffled, he rolled himself in a manta, threw himself on the floor, and tried to sleep, but in vain, for he began to find himself in a dilemma. The mysterious movements of the host of the fonda showed but too plainly that they were betrayed. The absence of the young Carlist was suspicious; even the quiet that reigned about the smuggler's house might be a blind. He had lost sight of the stranger, and he might escape while he was lying there. Every moment lost was dangerous to their plans, and minute by minute the dollars were dropping from his pouch. Manolo felt all this keenly, but so terrible was the temper of his employer if suddenly aroused, that he knew not how to act. He arose twenty times, and as many threw himself down again in vexation. Should he awake the miller and tell him what had occurred—there might be nothing in it after all; and then—what then?—he shuddered at the idea: it amounted to this—should he brave the danger of Mateo's rage, or lose his reward?

He knew the place on the road appointed for the gipsy and his gang, but he was uncertain whether they had yet set out. A thought struck him—he would act for himself: if he was successful, the dollars would flow freely into his pouch; and if he should fail, he would at least be out of the way of any sudden ebullition of anger.

His first object was Lope's house; there, still, all was quiet. He wandered out to the cattle-fair, and peeped into the ruined

fort; there too he failed, for it was empty. He re-entered the city, and went straight through it to the Gaucin gate, and at a venture entered into conversation with some of the soldiers who were loitering about; and from them he learnt that a one-eyed and a two-eyed man had passed through about two hours before, but neither of these answered the young Carlist's description.

He learnt also that the gipsy and the three brothers had gone out of the town, but they were on foot. The black horse was in the stable—the young Carlist could not have escaped as yet. Manolo, again baffled, was about to return, but chance or something else prompted him to stay. He lit his cigarillo, and sat down on a bench outside the guard-room. Presently he heard one of the soldiers call out—

"Hillo, my friend with the one eye, what have you done with your horses?—sold them, eh?"

"The Facciosos have got them," cried another. "The dogs scared you so that you tumbled off and ran away on foot. Vaya, is it not so?"

"No, no," said el Tuerto, laughing; "I leave that for you brave soldiers."

"Fairly answered, by Santiago," said a serjeant; "if you were not so ugly, I would ask you to drink some aguardiente."

"And get the blind side of me," said the one-eyed, moving on: "á Dios, amigos—take care of yourselves, the Carlists are coming."

Suddenly the whole truth flashed on the charcoal-burner's mind. They had been duped—stupidly, easily duped. For the first time he remembered the path by the gardens. The absence of the stranger was now accounted for—he had escaped—the gipsy and his gang were too late—fresh fuel for Mateo's fury—it must find vent—what direction would it take? The innkeeper's visit to Lope, that was the channel into which it must be turned.

While Manolo, like an afrite, was prowling about, meditating and planning evil against the human race, alone in the marble court sat Frascita.

Soft and mild as the gentle trade-wind which scarcely ruffles the bosom of the heaving ocean is love when all runs smoothly on. But should a cloud arise, and darken heaven's blue expanse,

then, like the fearful hurricane, it sweeps over the agitated mind, and leaves a shattered wreck behind.

The maiden's overwrought mind, which had so nobly borne up, and insisted on her lover's flight, was now filled with a thousand agitating thoughts, doubts, and fears. Hers was not the tempered sorrow which slowly wastes away the drooping form, but the wild, impetuous rush of the mountain stream, which swollen by the melted snows despises all control. That meeting, that parting, had filled her heart full of burning and unquenchable passion. He was her first, her only love, and she an Andalucian maiden. What was the world now to her without her Juan?—a blank, a dreary waste. Yet the atmosphere which surrounded her seemed full of his presence, and the babbling splash of the fountain murmured his name incessantly, and her bosom heaved tumultuously as she recalled to her mind his tale of love. The tears ran down her pallid cheeks, and she clasped her little hands together as fancy presented to her imagination the dangers and difficulties of his escape. Oh! how she longed to be with him, to partake of his sufferings, or rejoice in his triumphs! Poor Frascita! Thy cup of woe is filling rapidly, but it has not yet overflowed. Weep on.

So occupied was the maiden with her own sad thoughts, that the minutes flew unheeded by, and she was not aware of the presence of her uncle. Lope, who had not long before parted from the host of the fonda, stood there silently watching the deep affliction of his lovely niece: those burning tears confirmed the resolution he had already made. He called her softly by her name—"Frascita."

She looked up and smiled through her tears.

"Do not grieve so, dear girl; take courage; all will yet go well."

"I cannot bear this," sobbed the maiden. "Would that I had never seen him."

"Are you too agitated to listen to me, dear niece?" inquired Lope tenderly, kissing away her tears and embracing her fondly. "Sweet one, can you undertake a long and tedious journey?"

Frascita lifted up her drooping head, and pushing back the long lustrous tresses which shaded her lovely countenance, looked hopefully yet wistfully into her uncle's face.

The sudden change of expression, the ray of hope that gleamed in her tearful eyes, spoke more than words could convey; but she replied eagerly, "Yes, yes, dearest uncle, even to the end of the world."

"That 's my brave girl; we will leave this before daylight to-morrow: they want to part us—shall we not prevent them? I have friends at Gibraltar, and no plots or treachery can touch us there: besides, a little bird has whispered in my ear that Frascita's thoughts are already travelling in that direction. What say you, then, niece of mine—will you go with me?"

The maiden blushed deeply, but did not speak.

"But, Frascita, what will Mateo say to our flight? for such he will call it."

"O uncle!" exclaimed Frascita, shuddering; "that fearful man! does he go with us?"

"The Virgin forbid! He has deceived me, and I trust him no longer."

"How has he deceived you?" inquired the maiden quickly and eagerly.

"Be not alarmed, dear niece; in trying to trick me, he has overreached himself. Your handsome Carlist is safe enough. Now go and rest yourself; dry those tears, and put on a smiling countenance. We will go to the bull-fight this evening. Show no symptoms of grief or agitation; but flirt, coquet as usual, and shine forth, as you are, the Pride of the Sierras."

The sun has passed the meridian; the morning is gone—the evening is approaching with her softening influence.

Behold Frascita, more brilliant than ever, in the crowded bull-ring, the admired of all. The gallant matadors saluted her; the water-carrier heaved a sigh as he presented a sparkling goblet of agua fresca—the hardy mountaineer gazed on her with a look of affectionate pride—a murmur of admiration passed amongst the rugged soldiers—strangers as they went by stopped a moment involuntarily to look on such dazzling loveliness—they could not help it—homage to beauty is natural to the heart of man; there is a spell in it that nothing but an ascetic can resist.

Mateo sat by her side. What were his feelings? Could he prevent himself from drinking deep, burning draughts of love? No, but the chalice was poisoned.

Admiration of her person filled his veins with a fierce, uncontrollable passion.

She smiled on him, and that smile pierced his very vitals. All scruples, if he had any, were removed. She must be his—all his—his alone. Their eyes met; he absolutely gasped for breath. The bulls entered unheeded; the pastime he most delighted in went by unnoticed. A mist veiled the people, the ring, the combat; he saw but her alone—but behold, it was through a sea of blood.

Lope too was there, splendidly dressed in the Majo costume, and conversing gaily with those around him, or apparently watching the vicissitudes of the fight; now applauding some daring feat of the toreros, or some desperate charge of the enraged bull, as he overthrew both horse and rider. But the agitation of the miller did not escape his notice: he saw those eyes fixed on his niece with an expression that he could not mistake. He saw too that Frascita was acting her part to admiration; yet he feared that she would not be able to sustain it long under such an ordeal. He knew not what a woman can endure when the suffering is for love. Poor maiden! and was it not torture to appear gay when all was sad within; to smile on one she hated, when those smiles ought only to be wreathed for one, how deeply loved? She saw him—him, her hero, again subduing with his noble courage and matchless skill the dreaded bull; but she felt at the same time that Mateo's eye was riveted intently on her; and, strange to say, this sustained her courage. No moisture suffused those sparkling eyes; they seemed positively to glitter with the brilliancy of diamonds; nor were her cheeks pale; but a blush, soft as the reflection of a damask rose in the limpid water, came and went flickeringly, like the pinky lights in the northern sky. The clear ringing laugh, the gay tones which seemed to flow spontaneously low and soft as the flutterings of the aspen leaves, reassured her uncle. Could this be the drooping maiden lost and overwhelmed in sorrow and in tears?

Thus, whilst the wretched horses, mangled and bleeding, were falling victims before the sharp horns of the savage bulls—whilst they were running their allotted course only to sink beneath the keen swords of the matadors, the Fates were busily weaving the threads of the future career of these three.

Who in all that dense, that gay and laughing throng, could have surmised what was passing in their minds? There was but one, and he a dirty, shabbily dressed little man, sitting in the sun. But this man scented blood from afar, as the vulture is said instinctively to know when and where a battle is to be fought. The last bull has fallen—the soldiers have filed off—the ring is filled with a crowd, which slowly and gradually dissipates through the thronged gateways.

The Pride of Ronda, surrounded by a group of admirers, moved like a queen of beauty amidst them all. She beckoned to Mateo with her fan, and bade him in a low soft whisper keep by her side. They left the bull-ring together.

One by one her admirers dropped off as they fancied they saw in the miller a dangerous and successful rival; and they were left alone.

"See how they melt away like snow before the summer sun, Frascita," said Mateo bitterly; "when I am seen with my betrothed they fear me—but you do not, my Frascita?"

"Hush, hush, Mateo; this is not a time for fine speeches," said the maiden, laughing.

"Frascita, but one word—will you be mine?"

"It is not fair, Mateo, to urge me now. I pray thee, no more love-making. I am in too gay a humour for it. When the soft moon is shining on the silver stream, and the birds are charming the night with their song, then a tale of love sounds pleasantly, but not in a scene like this—it is a mockery now."

"Do not trifle with me, Frascita. I see how it is—you despise me."

"No; I tell you, no, Mateo. What a fancy! You are jealous, it seems; but, believe me, I do not despise you." And she spoke the truth, for we never despise what we hate.

"But you do not love me."

"How tiresome you are this evening!"

"Give me an answer, Frascita, dear Frascita, I beseech you."

"I should belie my sex were I to do so to-night, after what I have already said; so you must wait patiently, like a faithful and devoted lover."

Could Frascita have divined that the fate of her uncle hinged upon her words, how would she have answered?

The miller gave her in reply one of those fierce, expressive glances from his serpent-like eyes, but urged his suit no further.

That look haunted her all that night, and, no doubt, haunts her still if she is alive, although she knew not then what it meant.

The miller escorted Frascita to her uncle's house, but would not go in, and bade her farewell in a broken and husky voice, for he loved her with all the love that his nature was capable of.

Before he reached the Fonda de la Reyna he had recovered. The miller was himself again, savage, implacable as ever.

He found, as he had expected, Lope there; and drawing him aside, so as not to be overheard, said, "Lope, I have just heard that a Carlist chief has been taken by the soldiers on the Gaucin road; can that be your friend the Colonel?"

"Holy Virgin, is it possible?" replied the smuggler: "I was wrong, very wrong, to suffer him to go alone."

"So he is gone then, and it may be true?"

"Yes, he got suspicious, and would not stay."

"Rather, that you were afraid of the attractions of your lovely niece."

"You have partly guessed it. I was anxious to get him away from this; his attentions to her might have attracted notice, and you know well that would have endangered his safety. But he must not perish if I can assist him."

"Oh, it may not be true after all," replied Mateo, carelessly; "I for one do not believe the report."

"Why not?—nothing can be more probable. What can be done for him? Stay, I am well known; my presence may possibly save him. The fair is nearly over, and I might as well go to Gibraltar; for that is the direction he has taken."

"Shall I go with you, Lope? The roads, I hear, are dangerous?"

"No, no, Mateo, there is no occasion for that; you can remain behind and take care of Frascita—you have been nearly strangers of late. I will go alone: the people on the road, robbers and all, know me: there is no danger."

"Still I might as well accompany you: I long once more to be under the shade of my old cork-trees."

"As you please, Mateo: I shall start at daylight to-morrow morning."

"How do you propose to go, Lope?" inquired the miller, in a careless tone.

"I shall ride the Colonel's horse; perhaps I may be able to restore him to his proper owner."

"Why you told me, I thought, that you had yourself bought this horse."

"So I did; but it was agreed that the Colonel should have him for his next campaign if he escaped; and if I see him he shall have the horse. I would willingly purchase the Colonel's safety at many times the value of the best horse in Andalucia."

"You seem to take a great interest in this young Carlist."

"So I do: I knew his father well in former days."

They separated, each on his own business.

"He will go," thought Mateo.

"He will not go," thought Lope.

Which was right?

Shortly after this brief conversation, in which each was trying to deceive the other, a little swarthy man, well mounted, and with his escopeta slung at his saddle, passed through the Gaucin gate, and proceeded along the mountain road as fast as the rocky nature of the track admitted. He went on for five leagues without stopping. A solitary aloe standing at the mouth of a gloomy pass seemed to attract his notice, for there he got off his horse and whistled. Soon a dark figure appeared from behind a rock, and stood in the path. It was the gipsy horse-dealer.

The shades of evening had fallen, but still they seemed to recognise one another even at a considerable distance. Scarcely a word passed between them; but the man unslung his escopeta, and put a letter into the gipsy's hand. The latter mounted the horse, and rode rapidly off in the direction of Gaucin: the other stood a moment or two in the path, as if watching the departing horseman, and then climbing up the rocky acclivity, was soon lost in the gloom of the evening.

Thus had passed the afternoon of the second day of the fair.

The fog, which hung damply and drearily over the low country, had not reached the sierras. But again the pale moon shed

her broad light on cliff and rock, on tower and town—again the perfume of the flowers filled the night-air—again the waters sparkled—again the song of the nightingales was heard amidst the groves—again all was beauty, and harmony, and repose—again the fairest flower of Ronda sat at the open window which overlooked the gardens. It was past the midnight hour, but she could not sleep, and the cool breeze refreshed her feverish cheeks. As Frascita sat there, a note fell at her feet.

News from her beloved one! Eagerly she stooped to pick it up—rapturously she kissed it: she opened it. Why does she start as if a snake had bit those dewy lips? Not his—not his were the words—but Mateo's, the detested Mateo's! Yet she read the contents aloud:—

"Once more, Frascita, will you be mine? Beware!"

It was too much.

The maiden arose from her seat, and drawing her slender form up to its full height, with flashing eyes and compressed lips, and holding the note with her arm and hand outstretched as if it held some loathed object, with the other she tore it into a hundred pieces, and with a gesture of indescribable majesty and scorn she cast the fragments out of the window.

The little pieces whirled round and round in the air, glittering like snow-flakes in the moonray; and before they had reached the ground a half-suppressed, but deep and bitter curse, was audibly muttered beneath her feet—then all again was still.

The grey mists of morning hung about the craggy sierra, and filled the valleys with a veil of vapour, as Lope and his niece took their last farewell of their mountain home.

The broken, jagged, monstrous rocks loomed through the misty air gigantically vast and wild, presenting to the fancy the forms of domes, of minarets, of steeples, and ruined castles of mammoth times, scattered and mixed in strange confusion.

The tall figure of the smuggler, on his noble black steed, seemed magnified to a gigantic size, as he led the way along the rugged and winding track.

Frascita followed, seated in a comfortable arm-chair saddle, on a sure-footed mule.

They were alone.

The air was still. The only sounds that broke the monotony

of the silence that reigned around were the clattering of the hoofs on the hollow-sounding soil, or when a nightjar rose with a feeble cry, and glided on noiseless wings through the air across their path.

A lonely and a desolate scene is that wild sierra.

A single sunray shone like molten fire on the summit of a lofty crag as they reached the gloomy pass of the solitary aloe.

As they entered it a huge gaunt vulture rose from a projecting rock, and stretching wide his spreading wings, floated in circles over their heads.

The aloe is reached.

Hark! on each side of the path there is a sound of rushing feet.

From behind the rocks spring forth four men, with loud cries, "Death to the Carlist!"

One, a tall, dark man, stumbled over a stone, and fell heavily at full length; at the same moment a bullet whizzed over him.

It was from the escopeta of the smuggler. But he in a moment was dragged from his horse and placed on his feet.

With a sudden and powerful effort Lope broke from them.

He did not attempt to stir.

At this moment the gipsy recovered his senses, and sprang on his feet to revenge himself on the Carlist.

"Seize him, men!" he shouted, "or stab him if he resists;" and he darted forward with his long knife uplifted towards the gallant smuggler. Suddenly the gipsy recoiled, and the knife dropped from his hand.

"Back, men! back, on your lives!" he wildly said; "this is no Carlist, but the Señor Lope; there is some mistake."

"O holy Virgin! he is saved!" cried Frascita, clasping her little hands together, and lifting her eyes to heaven.

"Death to the Carlist spy!" still shouted the three rateros; "out of the way, Gitano; what is all this?"

"Ay, what is all this?" said the smuggler, haughtily. "What means this violence, my friends? I am no Carlist; I am Lope de la Vega el Contrabandista."

"O do not hurt him; he is my dear, dear uncle," screamed the maiden, in agony.

The robbers hesitated.

"There is no mistake," shouted a voice: "die! dog of a Carlist, die!"

A charcoal-burner sprang from a rock with the bound of a panther; a knife gleamed in the air; and before any one could move, or even speak, the sharp blade was buried to the haft in the breast of the unfortunate smuggler. The three brothers stood stupified at this sudden and awful catastrophe.

Ere they had recovered, the charcoal-burner seized Bavieca, turned him suddenly round, vaulted into the saddle, touched him with the bit, and in a moment the horse's hoofs struck fire on the flinty road, as he galloped madly away.

A shot was fired after him, but without success. For another moment the robbers gazed at the smuggler's body, as if paralyzed. Then simultaneously they gave a piercing cry, and starting off at a quick run, disappeared towards Ronda.

The gipsy shook his clenched fist at the flying Manolo, and departed rapidly in the opposite direction.

Frascita threw herself on the body of her uncle; she did not speak; no tears gushed from her eyes; she took his hand in hers; it was cold, already cold; she pushed back the hair from his forehead, and peered into his eyes; they were fixed—fixed in death's ghastly stare; she pressed her lips to his; no breath of life was there, although she thought they murmured her name. Alas! it was her own deep, sorrowful sigh.

Something like a small cloud passed between her and the sun.

It was the vulture, circling round his expected prey.

He settled on a rock close by.

Frascita started up, tossing her arms wildly in the air, and screamed aloud.

The vulture spread his wings, and again wheeled round and round, and again he settled on the rock.

Oh! it was a sight to melt a heart of stone, to see that young, fair girl, with her hands all dabbled with gore, striving to stanch the blood that still oozed from that ghastly wound, and kissing the pale wan lips of the corpse, as if that would bring life back again; then ever and anon springing wildly up to scare the ill-omened bird away, and flinging herself down beside the bleeding body.

Oh! it was a sad, sad sight.

The shadows from the aloe grew shorter and shorter.

The sun shone out in his meridian splendour.

The solitary beetle dragged his slow length along the barren soil.

The filthy vulture sat on the rock stupid and motionless, awaiting his banquet.

All was silent, solitary, and still.

The living and the dead were there in one embrace.

No one came.

The shadows increase; the valleys are already darkening.

No one comes.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Maiden is carried away—The Hut in the Moraima—The Miller and his Jackal—The Gipsy Horse-dealer is caught; is in danger of his life; is released unexpectedly, and meets with an old friend in the nick of time—Frascita awakes from her swoon—The Old Mariquita.

And who fired the shot? and why did the Gitano shake his fist at the flying charcoal-burner? Was it that he grieved for, and wished to avenge the assassination of the smuggler? Alas for human nature, no! He left him where he fell, weltering in blood. No, it was because he thought himself defrauded of his rightful spoil. Bavieca, his Bavieca, was gone. Could he but have secured undisputed possession of the much-coveted horse, what would he have cared for the deed that was done, or for the trick that had been in part successfully played on him?

Now as the gipsy walked rapidly away, he fancied, and not unnaturally, that he was entirely free from all participation in the death of Lope; he only saw that Mateo had endeavoured to get him out of the way for the purpose of regaining the portion of the prey which rightly belonged to him. The cunning inherent to his gipsy blood prompted him to this; nor had his revengeful disposition forgot the menacing gestures and insulting words of the terrible miller.

A Gitano never forgets or forgives an injury, although he may not be able to avenge it promptly or speedily; but he will wait, and wait patiently, silently, devotedly; he will bide his time until, like the persecuting, persevering mosquito, he has tried every inch to find an opening through which he may inflict a sting on his sleeping and unsuspecting enemy. Yet this had never entered the minds of Mateo or his jackal. Short-sighted fools! to them his part was over; he was thrown aside as a worn-out tool no longer useful; they thought no more of him—him the frustrator of all their plans.

The pointed leaves of the aloe still cast sharp and well-de-

fined shadows upon the white soil of the mountain road, as the clattering of approaching horses echoed through the rocky defile.

At length they come; thy watch, poor maiden, is nearly over.

Alas! she hears them not.

The horsemen are two in number, but one in crime and wickedness. One, mounted on a gallant black horse, which snorted wildly and quivered in every limb as it approached the aloe, bore on his features a look of savage joy and triumph. The other followed, leading a mule, on whose back was spread a litter covered with snow-white dimity.

See—they look cautiously around, and, dismounting, gently lift the lifeless girl from the bleeding body, and placing her inanimate form on the litter, cover it with the snowy cloth.

Then, with bloody hands, they lift the murdered man, and bearing him to the edge of the precipitous descent, deposit their burthen on a projecting ledge, and push it slowly over.

The body, with a dull, dead sound, falls on the pointed rocks, and rolls over and over into the hollow beneath—disfigured, mangled, torn. The vulture is no longer scared from his feast: the corpse to the beak and claws of the obscene bird; the breathing, though helpless maiden, to the tender mercies of these two.

Which is the better fate?

Yet, like the lifting of the veil of fog from the bosom of that glowing sea, brighter scenes may dawn upon her, though all is now obscurity, woe, and darkness.

And the sun twice went down and rose again, but without bringing light to the hapless Frascita.

Not very far from where the Gaucin road, leaving the glare of the lonely mountains, enters amidst the shadows of the gaunt old cork-trees, but well concealed from sight by the dense masses of forest, there then stood a wooden building. It could scarcely be dignified with the name of a house, nor was it so mean as a hut, for it had two rooms, but something between the two.

It was not a regular venta, but an occasional rendezvous for the contrabandistas and charcoal-burners when surprised by bad weather in the solitary *Moraima*.

A low mule-shed, with a broken-down door, stood alongside the building, through which might now be seen the gallant Bavieca quietly munching the barley in his nosebag. The sur-

rounding scene was one of sylvan beauty. Gnarled, old, gaunt cork-trees, with dark green foliage, and spreading fantastic branches, cast grotesque, irregular shadows on the sides of wild, broken hills which rose behind the hut, clothed with an endless variety of richly flowering shrubs; here tufted with graceful fern; here richly clad with yellow blowing broom, or dark-eyed cistus mingled with a profusion of wild roses.

Parallel with it ran a long, smooth, open glade of soft and pale green turf, along which meandered a little brook, where the pink oleander, the blue-eyed iris, and the yellow lily rivalled the flowers of the hills.

Several orange-trees, laden with golden fruit, and a row of noble aloes, some still in full blossom, stood by.

Hundreds of bee-birds, bright plumaged and busy, attracted by the honey distilled in the cups of the feathered flowers of the aloe spike, and the scented blossoms of the orange-trees, flitted round them gleaming in the sun's rays with green and gold.

At one end of the vista, far away in the distance, rose hill above hill, blue, misty, and beautiful; the other was lost in the deep green of the forest.

Opposite to the door, where the soil was moist and black, a dark tangled brake of lofty alders, and other trees which love the wet, gaily festooned and entwined with wild vines and other parasitical plants, gave to the landscape a cool and refreshing appearance. Out of this tangled and densely matted thicket, pushing the boughs cautiously aside, there suddenly came forth the form of a tall, gaunt, swarthy man.

As he did so, his quick keen eyes seemed to take everything in with one stealthy glance. He did not hesitate, but crossed the mossy glade with rapid steps, silent and noiseless as a red Indian, and glided like a spectre into the stable.

Scarcely had he done so when two other men came from out the cottage, with mantas in their hands, and spreading the rugs on the soft turf under the shade of the shed, they lit their cigars, and laid themselves down at their ease. These two were Mateo and his jackal.

They were so close to the stable that the gipsy could hear every word they said; and he did not fail to listen attentively.

"The old Mariquita," said the charcoal-burner, in reply to a

question from his employer, "is no fool. She is no more mad than you or I, but a cunning old hag, a witch if you like. She says the Señorita is fast recovering: she is in a sound sleep, and when she awakes her senses will come back again, and she will speak."

"The sooner the better," replied the miller; "I am already tired of waiting here: I want to hear the clack of the wheel; how the old mill will be astonished at the merry wedding we will have!"

"Pardon me for interrupting you," said Manolo, "but would it not be better to make sure first that the Señora will have you? It is easily done."

"Manolo," hissed the miller between his clenched teeth, "did I not want you, I would stab you where you sit: fool! I love this girl."

But the cloud soon passed away, and he added in a laughing tone—

"No, no, thou suspicious manikin, I will not defraud her of the rites of old mother church. Once under my roof, she is mine; but we will have it all regular, and the old Padre at the convent shall have his dues. To-morrow, when the sun is behind yon broom-clad hill, we will depart; so let everything be ready: and now, Manolo, let me sleep."

In a few minutes the two lay apparently buried in the deepest slumber, for guilt and crime murder not sleep in Spain. The charcoal-burner, however, rarely suffered the power of the drowsy god to overcome his habitual watchfulness; nor did he now: still he appeared to be really asleep.

Now was the gipsy's time.

He had already slipped a bridle over the horse's head, and was in the act of lifting the cumbrous demi-piqued saddle on to the broad back of the unwilling Bavieca, when suddenly a rope was thrown, like a lasso, over the head and shoulders of the horse-dealer, pinioning his arms to his sides, and he was thrown violently to the ground, and the grinning countenance of the charcoal-burner appeared at the doorway.

"Ha! ha!" cried he; "there you are, Gitano: so it's you, is it, like a trussed rabbit? What! you would prig the hacas whilst we were asleep, would you? Next time you try such a

trick on, don't attempt to put a saddle on, particularly if it 's a heavy one, I advise you. Hombre! you should be content with the beast himself: gipsies don't ride on saddles; the hide is good enough for them: take my word, bare-backed is the right way. Come now, what have you got to say for your noble self?"

The horse-dealer remained mute.

"Well, then, if you wo'n't speak, get up, black-face," said Manolo, still grinning, but jerking the rope, and pulling it tighter and tighter. "Come along; let 's see what the Señor Mateo will say to my springed woodcock."

The gipsy showed no signs of pain, but got up silently and sulkily, and followed the charcoal-burner out of the mule-shed.

Manolo brought him where he would be face to face with his employer when he sat up, and taking two or three more turns with the cord round the gipsy's legs, fastened it; and then he awoke the miller.

"Mil demonios! what is all this? Why do you awake me? Who is he? Speak, Manolo! and don't stand grinning there," said Mateo savagely.

The charcoal-burner briefly explained, and then withdrew a little on one side.

"Dog of a gipsy," said Mateo, sitting up and confronting the horse-dealer; "look at me: so you would steal the horse a second time; once won't do for you. Ha! were it not that I owe you something for what you have already done, I would shoot you where you stand. Who cares when a dog of a gipsy dies?"

"Oh! Señor Mateo, pardon me! pardon, I beseech you," said the gipsy in a soft, cringing, imploring tone; "I made a sad mistake; I thought the horse was mine."

"Yours!" cried the miller, staring at the unfortunate horse-dealer in utter amazement; "yours! And by what right, pray, do you claim him? Come, let us hear your plea; I will be advocate, alcalde, judge, and," added he laughing, but with a look of ominous meaning, "executioner if need be—I have played that part before now. Know you not that I am especial district, Gitano! We are in the Moraima. Come hither, Manolo, and listen to the advocate pleading his own cause."

The charcoal-burner approached to where the miller sat at his ease smoking his cigarillo, which he had kindled during his

speech; but where the gipsy stood bound, trembling and quivering in every joint, whilst beads of sweat appeared on his swarthy face. Had he been unbound, he could not at that moment have even attempted flight, for the miller's eye fascinated him; it not only deprived him of motion, but even of the power of speech.

He remained, therefore, silent, but that silence was dangerous.

"Speak, hound, or I will stab you where you stand," cried Mateo, jumping up in a rage.

But the movement broke the spell: the gipsy uttered an imploring cry.

Another low, faint scream responded like an echo from the hut, and at that moment an old withered crone came to the door and beckoned to Mateo with her finger.

Mateo started in his turn, and, exchanging a rapid glance with the charcoal-burner, turned into the building.

The gipsy cast a beseeching glance at Manolo, but said nothing.

"He is not worth killing," muttered that worthy, as he drew forth his long keen navaja, and gazed at its bright sharp point with an affectionate expression.

Whether the remembrance of the olla and the Malaga so liberally bestowed on him by the gipsy at the fair influenced his feelings, or whether he really did not think him worth a stab of the knife, we know not, for who can explain the motives of such a being? But with a sharp stroke he severed the cords that encircled the miserable Gitano, and continuing the movement of his hand, waved it in the air and pointed to the forest and the hut. Without stopping to thank his deliverer, the gipsy took the hint, darted off at full speed like a startled roe, and plunged at once into the tangled brushwood.

The charcoal-burner thought no more of him than he would of a thieving cur dog released from hanging: he little knew a gipsy's real propensities. He was gone, and that was enough for him.

But he did not go very far.

And did the gipsy feel grateful for the preservation of his life? Not he: he never thought about it at all; but still his heart was fixed on Bavieca.

As the horse-dealer, hardly knowing whither he went, struck

into one of those narrow sandy horse-paths that wind through the dark *Moraima*, he heard the jingling of bells, and a voice that he knew singing snatches of songs and whistling aloud merrily, making the old wood ring again; and as he turned a sudden angle of the road he encountered face to face our old friend the jovial little muleteer.

"Well met, friend horse-dealer," shouted Pepito joyously, springing from his horse and embracing the gipsy.

"News! news! Here, take a pull at the *bota*, it 's the right sort, real Xerez, and tell us how is the Señor Lope and the Señora his niece, and my adorable mistress."

"The Señor Lope is dead," replied the Gitano; "and the Señora not much better!"

"Dead! the Señor Lope dead!" faltered out the muleteer. "It is impossible: come, Gitano, you are joking with me—say so, come."

"You Christians are hard to convince, and you will never believe one of us; but it is as I tell you."

"Dead! the Señor Lope dead!" again repeated Pepe wildly. "I tell you, Gitano, that is impossible;" and he flew at him, caught him by the throat, and shook him violently. "Dog, you are deceiving me!"

"By all the gods you worship, it is true," stammered the horse-dealer between the pauses of the shaking. Pepe soon saw that the gipsy was not joking, and released his hold. Then, whilst the gipsy related his story, only concealing the part he himself had played, the poor little faithful muleteer stood there with tears in his eyes, crushing his broad-leafed hat between his compressed hands, and still he went on muttering, "Dead! the Señor Lope dead!—impossible, impossible!"

But when the gipsy told how he had not long before left the miller in undisturbed possession of the person of the unhappy Frascita, and the conversation he had overheard, indignation took the place of grief, and he called the miller a thousand opprobrious names, tearing his hair with very rage: but this fit too soon passed away; for Pepe, although excitable, was a shrewd little fellow, and prompt to action.

Dragging the horse-dealer under an old ilex, he made him sit down, produced some food from his alforjas, and unslung the bota.

The gipsy was hungry and thirsty, so he ate ravenously and drank copiously; but poor little Pepe could only drink.

The wine was good and strong, and soon took effect on his mercurial temperament; and he proposed right valiantly to the gipsy that they should go at once and try to rescue the imprisoned Señorita.

But this was not the Gitano's plan of operation: he had no idea of risking his life to save a girl of the hated race, although under ordinary circumstances he might have done so for a horse; but to attack the formidable miller was entirely out of the question. Pepito called him a coward, and urged him with promises of reward and threats of vengeance, but it was of no avail. The gipsy had too lately escaped from the miller's clutches to venture within their reach again, except at his own time, in his own stealthy manner, and for his own purposes: he, however, promised faithfully to keep a watch on Mateo's movements, and to communicate with Frascita if possible, and assure her of the safety of our hero.

Pepito wisely thought that this would encourage her in her present situation, and he was right. They settled on a spot near which the miller must pass on his way to the mill, and there they agreed to meet early on the following morning, if nothing happened in the interval. Pepe gave the horse-dealer his escopeta, all the dollars he had in his sash, the rest of the food, and the bota, in which still remained a small portion of the generous wine; and promising him a large reward if they succeeded in rescuing the smuggler's niece, climbed again into his saddle.

And they each departed by the way that they had come.

But the muleteer neither sung nor whistled as usual; his heart was too full of grief and indignation.

"Blood! there will be more blood!" muttered the gipsy to himself. The Busne shall die and the Cali shall have his horse again." "Hurrah!"—

The scream that issued from the hut was, indeed, from the lips of the forlorn maiden.

She had awoke as if from a fearful dream, perhaps to a worse reality.

As her senses were gradually restored to her, she became con-

scious that she was in a house, and not on the wild sierra: she could see through the latticed casement the waving of the branches, and she would hear the twittering of the birds. For one moment she fancied that it was all a dream, and that she was again amidst the gardens of her own loved mountain-home. But the cry of the Gitano brought back to her recollection the whole scene on the mountain instantaneously, as a flash of vivid lightning shows some awful danger concealed by the darkness and gloom of the murky night.

She screamed aloud, and fainted away again.

When a second time Frascita recovered her senses, she found a withered old woman, whose face was like shrivelled parchment, but gaily adorned with orange-flowers in her thin grey locks, and a handsome lace mantilla over her skinny shoulders, busily chafing her temples, and singing broken snatches of songs with a harsh croaking voice.

Frascita was about to speak, but she was prevented; for the old crone, pressing her bony hand on the maiden's lips like withered twigs on a moss-rose, immediately broke out into a kind of doggrel rhyme—

"Hush! hush! my sweet bird,
Not a word! not a word!
For if you should speak,
'T will keep you quite weak;
I 'll sing you to sleep
With songs that shall creep
Low and soft on the ear;
So, sleep, my sweet maiden, without any fear."

"Ay de mi, madre mia! Where am I? Who are you?" exclaimed Frascita, shuddering at the strange old woman, who without noticing the interruption continued her rhymes—

"The birds in the sky
Sing cheerily, cheerily;
But sweeter am I,
Caroling merrily.
Then rest, maiden, rest,
Your roses to keep;
Come, lie on my breast,
And I 'll sing you to sleep.
Young maids, when they marry, should never go weep."

"What mean you, mother? Where am I? Who brought me here? Oh, tell me, for the love of the blessed Virgin," said the bewildered Frascita, as she endeavoured to rise from the bed.

"Lie still, my honey-bird; lie still, my rose of the sierras. You are safe enough, my darling! He will protect you," answered the hag. Then she continued in the same strain as before—

"The fox of the mountains
Hath met with his fate,
The deer of the forest
Hath found a sweet mate;
The birds in their flight
Shine like gold in the sky,
But none are so bright
As the maiden's soft eye.
Then rest thee, my daughter, without any fear,
The day is at hand, and the bridegroom is near."

"Oh, this is too terrible," murmured Frascita, hiding her face in the bed-clothes: and still the beldame went on—

"The birds they are singing
In frolicksome mood,
The bells they are ringing
In th' evergreen wood;
She 's fair as the day,
He 's strong and he 's tall,
And none say him nay,
For he masters them all.
Then blush not, fair maiden, but rest by my side;
To-day thou art single, to-morrow a bride."

When Frascita again dared to raise her drooping head and look up,

The hag was gone, and instead, there stood by her bedside the terrible miller.

Mateo gazed tenderly, nay even affectionately, on the maiden's pallid countenance; for, now that he had reached the coveted Moraima, he thought that she was his—all his.

He therefore addressed her in a kind, conciliatory manner, deploring with many expressions of regret the unfortunate mistake that had been made in the murder of her uncle for a Carlist chief, and explained why she had been brought to the hut, saying, that as she was too ill to bear the journey to Gibraltar, and as

it was expected every hour that Gaucin would be attacked by the Facciosos, and knowing old Mariquita, strange as she was, to be a capital nurse, he thought that the quiet of this retired spot would be more likely to restore her to consciousness, and assist in her recovery better than any more noisy, frequented place. He made many tender inquiries after her health, but did not urge his suit, and said nothing about the young Carlist.

All this was plausible and specious enough, but it did not completely deceive the maiden.

Frascita listened attentively to what Mateo said. She had no suspicion of his having had any participation in the death of her uncle. Terrible and hateful as she deemed the miller, this had never entered her imagination; but that he would take advantage of her unprotected situation, was not for one moment to be doubted. He continued, however, to talk kindly to her about her friends at Gibraltar, saying that he would take her there as soon as it was practicable, perhaps in a day or two; but that at that moment the roads were impassable on account of the Carlists, who were at San Roque.

Frascita, amidst all her grief, her doubts, and fears, longed to ask him what had become of Juan; but she dared not, for she feared to arouse and revive that jealousy which now seemed extinct.

Mateo himself believed that the young Carlist had been captured in the Felicidad, for so it was reported in the country, the people on the coast having seen her cut off from Gibraltar by the armed felucca. It was he, moreover, who had apprised the authorities at Gaucin of the flight of Colonel Juan towards the coast, by the note sent on with the horse-dealer; and they had, in their turn, warned the Carabineros at the Guadiara by messengers to be on the alert, and to seize any suspicious individuals. But the real object of this note was to get the gipsy out of the way, lest (as he did) he should recognise Lope, and interfere with their plan of separating Frascita from her uncle by that simple Spanish method, the knife!

So far the miller had been completely successful, in spite of the return of the Gitano, who, ignorant of the contents of the note, hastened back to secure Bavieca; and everything augured well for the future, if he could only succeed in lulling suspicion in the

maiden's breast for a day. He therefore, as we have seen, assumed a kind and conciliatory manner, the more natural, as he really in some degree loved Frascita, and violence did not now seem necessary to secure his object.

How he was foiled in this, will presently appear. Mateo went out, and Frascita was left alone. As she communed with her own mind, and began to reflect, she quickly perceived the utter helplessness of her situation. Alone, in the solitary Moraima, without a friend, what had she to protect or cheer her but her own maiden courage, and her love for Juan; and what was this against the ferocious disposition of Mateo and his gang? She could not understand why she had been brought to this lonely place, if not for some particular purpose—and what was that purpose? She reflected, and shuddered. The shallow cunning of Mateo had not duped her; on the contrary, she saw through his kindness an ominous future. Now she began to see the meaning of the songs sung by the strange old woman; these, at first, had only terrified her by their strangeness; now the reality—the horrible reality burst suddenly upon her understanding. She—she who loved with all her soul a bright and noble being, must wed this fearful, this hateful man! Could she do so? No, no! she would sooner die—a thousand times die.

Presently she heard the noise of horses led out of a stable, and she could see two men girthing their saddles in front of the hut. One, she knew, was the miller, by his dress, and tall athletic figure; but who was the other? Suddenly a cold, shuddering horror crept with an icy chill over the maiden's tender frame, and her limbs shook as if palsied.

It was he—her uncle's murderer!

Ay! even in that one awful moment when the dying smuggler fell to the ground, every feature of his slayer was impressed upon her mind as if burnt in with fire. She would have known that face anywhere, at any time, could she have lived for centuries.

Hark! they ride away.

A fearful vision is removed from her sight; but it has left a terrible impression behind. Everything that had occurred passed in rapid succession before her.

The startling, the awful reality—the certainty of her wretched

fate—depending, as it now did, on Mateo's will, was fully revealed to her.

It was he, then, who had contrived, if not executed her uncle's death, by means of the charcoal-burner. It was evident now that the story of the Carlist chief was only a pretence to blind her, and render Mateo less odious; his kindness, therefore, was all assumed. What could she do to avoid her fate? Should she fly, now that they were gone? Alas! she could scarcely stand; and even if she was able to move, whither could she direct her steps?—it was altogether hopeless. Should she try and make a friend of the old Mariquita? It was a forlorn chance, but hope catches at straws.

She arose, and called Mariquita, and lay down again, for she felt herself weak.

The old woman came in, singing as before.

"What does my bright lily want? Shall the old woman sing her to sleep?"

"No, mother; I want to talk to you."

Mariquita sat down on a low stool by the side of the bed—which had no curtains, yet nearly filled the little room, and from which Frascita could see into the wood through the open casement.

The maiden no longer shuddered at the presence of the strange old hag; for, in such a situation, to have by her one of her own sex—even such as Mariquita, was a relief.

"Madre mia," said Frascita, in a low, soft, sweet voice, "did you ever love?"

"The bird flies, the deer runs, the fish swims, the Andalucian maiden loves," replied the hag:

"The fish to the sea,
The bird to the grove,
The herd to the lea,
The maid to her love.

Ha, ha, ha! did old Mariquita, the withered—the shrivelled—the despised—the spit upon, ever love?

"Oh, he was young and fair!
Oh, he was good and true!
All golden was his hair,
His eye was soft and blue.

He spoke not with our tongue,
His voice was in his eye;
They told me it was wrong—
I answered with a sigh.

"Ah, maiden!" exclaimed the hag, sighing deeply, as if the recollection of those days of love had suddenly awakened in her mind all her previous history—"It was war time; our village was full of soldiers; but they were not of our race—they spoke with a strange tongue; they worshipped not at our altars. There was one among them, beautiful, tall, and fair; rosy as the streaks of the evening sky, and his hair shone like threads of gold.

"He gazed upon my charms,
And heaved a burning sigh—
He clasped me in his arms—
Alas, I could not fly.
Alas, I could not fly,
I loved him all too well;
I gave him sigh for sigh,
He triumphed—and I fell.

"Woe! woe! they discovered our secret meetings, but they knew not all that had passed between us. We were separated, and I was forced to wed one I detested. Maiden! you know not what it is to pass the dreary, wakeful night, by the side of one loathed—as I loathed him they had wedded me to, whilst the beating heart throbs for the embraces of the loved one. A child was born to me—a child of love! His eyes were blue as the vault of heaven; his skin as fair as the snows of the sierras; his cheeks rosy as the pomegranate blossom; and his hair became in colour like the golden lily. My husband tore the sweet babe from my embrace, reviled—spat upon me, and turned me out into the wide, wide world. The Beauty of the Village became an outcast and a wanderer."

"Alas, alas! poor woman!" said the kind-hearted maiden; "yours is a sad, sad story."

"Listen!" cried the hag, starting up, and tossing her arms wildly about:—

"Hark, thundering cannons roar!
Hark, pealing volleys rattle!
Hist, silence reigns once more!
Hist, distant flies the battle!

Where o'er the bloodstained plain
The hungry vultures hover,
Amidst the mangled slain
A woman seeks her lover.

"Ay, shudder, maiden, and close your eyes, for 't is a fearful scene; but the delicate beauty sought everywhere, over mountain and over plain, through village and through town, amidst the fierce, wild soldiery, exposed to want, to misery, to insult, until she found him—a prey to the vultures!

There 's blood upon his cheek,
There 's foam upon his lip,
That lip that mine did seek,
Its honeyed sweet to sip;
All fixed his soft blue eye,
So ghastly and so dim,
But oh! I could not die,
But live to weep for him.

"Yes, maiden, yes; he fell like a hero, fighting for our liberty—for me, for all of us; there, on that blood-stained field, my beautiful, my loved one died, and I became what I am—a miserable, degraded, mad old woman!" and Mariquita buried her face in her hands, as if overcome by the tale she had just told; but those skinny fingers, instead of a starting tear, concealed from the eyes of the deeply sympathizing Frascita a withering, demoniacal sneer.

CHAPTER IX.

In which the Story returns to our Hero—His trusty little Guide leaves him—Gomez appears at San Roque—Our Hero rejoins his party—The Arriero and the Charcoal-Burner—They fight; Pepito wins, but success is dangerous—A Friend in need.

THE miller is at his mill, making preparations for the coming day—the maiden is asleep dreaming of her lover—the gipsy is prowling about waiting for Bavieca—but where is our hero all this time? Juan, we begin to feel that we have been treating you with great neglect; but the fact is, you were doing nothing but fretting yourself, and wasting your time and patience for two whole days.

During that awful time, when his mistress was lying senseless and inanimate on the bleeding body of her dearly loved uncle, amidst the uncouth rocks of the lonely sierra, with the vulture and the beetle sole spectators of her miserable plight, Juan was lazily, if not comfortably, smoking his cigar on the little deck of the Felicidad, as she lay snugly moored amidst her fellow-smugglers, waiting for an opportunity to rejoin his party. His thoughts were now nearly equally balanced between his lovely mistress and the success of his faction. Before he had seen Frascita his whole soul and all the energies of his vigorous mind had been bent on one sole object—the cause of the beloved Carlos Quinto el Rey—but now the case was much altered; new features arose that he had not before seen. Gradually, as he reflected, the veil was lifted from before his eyes, and he saw in this struggle all the horrors, all the miseries of a civil war. Even putting on one side as nothing the miller's jealous and formidable rivalry, how could he even ever hope to see his mistress again without wading through a sea of blood, perhaps shed by those she cared for?

Now he began to shudder at the cruel atrocities committed by both sides, and the certainty of the wretched fate awaiting all who should by ill luck fall into the hands of the party opposed

to them. No mercy—no quarter! Death, sudden and violent, rapine, fear, and outrage, went hand to hand in this unnatural contest. Love had at length shown him the picture in its true colours, which loyalty and ambition had heretofore covered with a flimsy curtain. Yet his honour was pledged; he must rejoin Gomez at any risk, at any sacrifice.

Our hero resolved, however, to endeavour, as far as his limited power allowed him, to mitigate the horrors of the strife; and if he could not succeed in that—if they still persisted in this war to the knife, that he would withdraw from the struggle on the first opportunity when he could do so with honour, and quit for ever his beloved but unhappy country.

Pepe, having seen our hero safe for the present, and having procured a pass through the agency of Lope's friends, of whose violent death no report had as yet reached Gibraltar, had landed on the Rock, and strove, although vainly, to procure a horse to take him back to Ronda. They would not lend him one, for they were afraid of the Facciosos; and moreover, the Queen's troops at the lines seized every horse that could carry a man.

The little arriero, however, impatient himself to rejoin Lope, and urged by Juan, who wished him to return and assure his mistress of his safety, set out on foot on the evening of the second day for San Roque.

There he found what he wanted—a good horse, some food, an escopeta, and a bota of Xerez; for he was well known there, and Lope had many friends in that part of the country, and they knew not of his unhappy death.

Fortunately it was late in the evening when Pepe reached San Roque, and this made him postpone his departure until the following morning; and he was jogging merrily along through the lonely Moraima when, as has been narrated, he met the scared Gitano.

The merry little muleteer cared for neither Christinos nor Carlists; they were all the same to him: but on the sands and on the San Roque road he met many fugitives—soldiers and carabineros—men, women and children, horses, mules and asses, all laden with household furniture, flocking towards Gibraltar, and all who were able were crying out "The Carlists are coming—the Carlists are coming!"

Pepe threaded his way through the crowd quite unheeded; they were all too frightened to take any notice of him.

Lucky little dog! he passed through the disordered Christinos unquestioned and uninjured, and quitted San Roque just as the opposite party was entering, and, more opportunely still, encountered the horse-dealer exactly in the nick of time.

So the Fates willed it.

But we are again leaving our hero—it is really too bad.

On the morning of the third day a singular but not unwelcome spectacle presented itself before the eyes of the young Carlist, who still remained on board the smuggling craft.

I can fancy the shade of some grave old Roman sitting on a rock below Carteia, where once perhaps his galley lay snugly moored, surveying with astonishment the incongruous warfare around him.

"Motley is your only wear," says the fool; and surely there was enough of it here.

Scared women and children—irregular regulars—militia-men in an awful quandary—heaps of household furniture—horses and cattle—mules, donkeys, pigs, goats, and even fowls, all huddled higgledy-piggledy together, sheltering under the flag that waves over the grim old rock; or flying before a wild-looking, armed rabble—themselves pursued—speaking the same language, and evidently of the same breed.

Splendid-looking soldiers in scarlet uniform, with heads erect, and measured tread, keeping them apart with especial politeness. "No fighting here, if you please, gentlemen." Other men equally splendid-looking, but in blue jackets, not quite so politely requesting one party to walk off, with special messengers in the shape of cannon-balls, giving the unfortunate Carlists a bellyful of iron, whilst their general was giving the English officers a bellyful of pork-chops and vino seco.

Joking apart, the whole of this business appeared to be an anomaly, a puzzle to the uninitiated—a war and not a war.

It is a fact well known to many, that several of the officers of the garrison of Gibraltar lunched with Gomez at San Roque at the very time when the 'Jaseur' was firing round shot at the unfortunate Carlists as they were marching round the head of the bay near the mouth of the Guadaranque, killing one miserable

aide-de-camp mounted on a white horse, and a few others, I believe, of less note.

Juan soon learned the reason of the appearance of the disordered and flying Christinos.

Gomez had occupied San Roque in force; his whole army was there, or on the road. There could be now no difficulty in joining him. Juan's heart beat high at the prospect, and for one moment he forgot Frascita and his love, and he urged the captain of the Felicidad to land him immediately. But the crafty Genoese pointed out the danger they would run by day from the boats of the vessels of war, both English and Spanish, that were lying in the bay, and bade him wait until nightfall. That was a long, dreary, thoughtful day to our hero, but, like all others, it had an end; and then, before the moon had risen, with muffled oars a small sharp boat cut silently and rapidly the blue waters of the bay until it ran with a gentle grating sound high upon the shelving sand beneath the cliffs of old Carteia.

Juan jumped nimbly out, and alone, without a guide, succeeded in finding the San Roque road, and unchallenged entered the town.

Making himself known to some of the Carlist soldiers (for he was still disguised in his majo dress) he inquired for the General, and in a few minutes he found himself once more in comparative safety, and heartily welcomed by that singular being; and from him Juan learned the true position of affairs.

Gomez, after overrunning the greater part of Andalucia, and having occupied Cordova for nearly a week, was now driven fairly into a corner, and apparently hemmed in by three separate parties of the Queen's forces, without a chance of escape.

But he did not despair.

The attempt to raise the country had failed. Ribero, Alaix, and he who, at one time an exile at Gibraltar, has since played such a conspicuous part in the annals of Spain, the fierce Narvaez, followed close on his footsteps, whilst detachments of the Christinos were flying before him.

They ought to have crushed him—but they did not; they ought to have driven his army into the sea—but they could not: for Gomez by his rapid movements baffled and foiled them all. Yet what the Christino leaders were doing for the three days that Gomez was at San Roque "I cannot tell."

Juan, in his turn, was relating his adventures at Ronda, and his wonderful escape in the Felicidad, when they were suddenly disturbed by a tremendous uproar.

Gomez occupied the principal posada of San Roque. The inhabitants of this little town showed but little antipathy to the Carlists, and they, in return, abstained mostly from plundering; and such, strange to say, was the case nearly over the whole of Andalucia.

The uproar beneath the windows of the inn continued, and it became evident that there was some unusual commotion. The cause of this must now be told.

The night had fallen when Pepe, with his heart still full of burning grief and bitter indignation, returned the jaded haca to his owner, who lived in the outskirts of the town. The muleteer strolled quite unconcernedly through the streets, amidst the wild-looking, fierce Biscayan soldiery.

His arriero's dress did not attract notice; and anxious to ascertain whether Colonel Juan had yet contrived to join his party, he entered a venta which stood close by the principal posada of the town, where several Carlist soldiers were smoking and drinking.

Amidst a group of redcaps there stood a man in the dress of a charcoal-burner; but his back was turned towards the door, and Pepe could not see his face.

The arriero seated himself at a small table and called for some wine; and he was in the act of raising the first glass to his lips when he heard a voice that he thought he knew.

His hand remained upraised, with the glass to his lips; but he did not drink.

Again that voice spoke.

Suddenly the muleteer's eyeballs glared like a wild cat's, and he gnashed his teeth together—you might have heard them rasp—as with a fierce cry he sprang from his seat, upsetting the little table, bottle, glasses, and all; and with one bound he was alongside the charcoal-burner, and laying his hand on his shoulder, twirled him round with a quick, violent movement, and they were face to face. Pepe shook his fist in the charcoal-burner's face; but, choked with passion, he could not speak;—the gleam of his eyes showed what he meant.

Manolo—for it was that worthy—had evidently been drinking,

and was without his hat, and he started back at first at the startling and sudden appearance of the muleteer. But quickly recovering himself, he drew forth his long knife and rushed at Pepe; but his arm was seized by the soldiers, and he was held back, struggling violently, and cursing horribly.

"Let us have it all fair. A ring! a ring!" cried they.

"Not in here, not in here!" called out the alarmed host; "not in here, gentlemen, if you please: go out in the street."

"In the street, in the street!—the moon is up, and there is light enough," cried the soldiers, as they dragged the struggling charcoal-burner into the open air.

They had heard nothing of the cause of this deadly quarrel; but some backed the muleteer, others the charcoal-burner. The waning moon shed a faint, dubious light down the open street upon this strange scene; but the atmosphere, so pure and serene, interrupted not her rays until they fell on the forms of the wild and now excited soldiers.

Pepe, drawing his knife, followed the charcoal-burner into the street.

They were apparently well matched; each about the same size and stature, and each armed with a long sharp-pointed knife. But Pepe, though mad with rage, and struck dumb with intense horror at the sight of his dear master's murderer, had not been drinking; and, moreover, he had his hat—and much to avenge.

The lower orders of Spaniards practise from their infancy the use of the deadly navaja; it is their inseparable companion, and they can use it with a dexterity almost incredible. I have often seen in the towns and villages of Andalucia little boys playing at knives with pieces of wood, and showing great skill and readiness in handling their mimic weapons. The Englishman has his fist, the Irishman his shillelah, the Negro his head, and the Spaniard his knife, which he uses as promptly and readily as the others; but the effect, as may be supposed, is widely different.

"Now then, my gamecocks, at it!—a dollar on the first stroke!" shouted one of the arriero's backers.

"A dollar on black face!" cried another, patting the charcoal-burner on his back.

Pepe and Manolo glared fiercely at one another, as each now stood prepared to spring, crouching as a panther does before his

leap—their knives firmly grasped in their right hands, with the thumb on the blade, and held about level with the knee.

The soldiers formed a ring round them, and stood in silence; for now it was not fair to speak.

"Toma!" shouted the charcoal-burner, as with a rapid movement he jumped at the arriero with a deadly intention, but uncertain feet.

As Manolo was in the air, Pepe with his left hand dashed his broad-leafed hat into his face, and baffled his aim.

The impetus of the spring, aided by the aguardiente he had drank, carried the charcoal-burner staggering forwards; and as he passed, the muleteer, jumping quickly on one side, drove his long knife up to the haft in the side of him who had slain his best friend, and with a shout of triumph he cried, "Take that for Lope!"

It was all over in a minute.

The wounded charcoal-burner fell forwards on his face, with the red blood spirting from the gash in his side.

The soldiers, accustomed as they were to scenes of blood, were shocked at the suddenness of the catastrophe, although they might have expected it; and promptly, but gently and with ease, raised the dying charcoal-burner, and strove to stanch the blood; but in vain: life was fast fleeting away.

"Water, bring me water," gasped Manolo; "I have—something—to tell—I am faint—I burn—water—water."

The soldiers promptly procured some, and poured it down his throat and over his face.

This revived the charcoal-burner for a moment, and he murmured out:—"That—man—is—a spy—a Christino—a spy;" and, raising himself on one hand, he pointed with the other at the arriero, who stood silently by regarding his dying enemy.

This was the last effort of nature, for with a look of deadly hate in his fast-closing eyes, and a curse on his lips, the ruffian breathed his last, and Lope was avenged.

No sooner did Pepe perceive that it was all over with his foe, than all his ferocity vanished in an instant, and the object for which he had returned to San Roque again became uppermost in his mind. He thought not of escaping, but of continuing his search for Colonel Juan. He had avenged the uncle; he must

now save the niece. He picked up his hat, and was about to depart; but the attention of the savage and capricious soldiers was now, by the dying man's words, unpleasantly directed to the victorious little muleteer.

"A Christino spy! A Christino spy! A fair game! A fair game!" shouted they, crowding round him on all sides in every direction.

One knocked his hat off—another tried to trip him up—a third struck him across the face with his bayonet—and he stood every chance of being torn to pieces on the spot.

Amidst the shouts, execrations, and blows, which literally poured upon him, he heard the voice of a serjeant asking the soldiers what all the row was about, and who they had got there.

"Only a little Christino dog prowling about to see what is going on: he has just killed a man who told us all about him," was answered by one of the soldiers.

"Put him in the guard-room," said the serjeant, "and we will see what he is made of to-morrow."

"No, no!" cried the soldiers all together; "he is ours: we will see what he is like now—no to-morrow—there is no time like the present."

"Listen to me, for the love of God!" screamed the half-bewildered, half-enraged arriero, catching at the serjeant's arm; "I 'm no spy; I 'm Pepe the arriero: it 's a matter of life and death."

"Arriero or no arriero, it 's likely to be that soon enough," said the serjeant, turning away and shrugging his shoulders.

Pepe tried to break through them, but the crowd was impenetrable. Like a fox mobbed in cover, he was headed at every point, and banded from one to another of the ruffianly soldiery, who, like the hounds, were eager for blood, now they had once smelled it.

Pepe glared fiercely at them, and brandished aloft his bloody knife.

But they only laughed at him.

"Only listen to me," cried the muleteer again, at the top of his voice; "only listen to what I have to say, or take a message to Colonel Juan, or take me to General Gomez; I don't care what you do with my carcass afterwards."

But this had no effect; they only laughed at him the more.

"A pretty joke, truly," said one; "take such a thing as that to General Gomez!"

"No, no, my little friend: he doesn't deal with such petty articles; he leaves them to us poor fellows," said another.

"Come now," cried a third, "shout Viva Carlos Quinto el Rey! Down with the usurper! Down with the Liberals!"

"Anything; everything you please," replied the arriero, clasping his hands together; "only let me speak to the Colonel, if it's only for a moment."

"The fox fears for his skin," said one even more savage, if possible, than the rest. "What say you, my boys, shall we see how he looks without any?"

Poor Pepito's fate hung upon a thread.

At that moment a window of the posada was thrown up, a head protruded, and a harsh commanding voice cried out "Silence, beasts! What is all this noise about?"

"It is only a spy of the Liberals, your Excellency, that the soldiers have caught," replied the serjeant, touching his cap.

"Is that all?" said the General, in the act of turning away.

Pepe with a sudden effort broke from the soldier's grasp, and, running under the window, which was not more than six feet from the ground, cried out, "I 'm no spy! I 'm Pepe the arriero, come with a message to Colonel Juan—a message from his mistress of life and death."

Gomez, fortunately for our hero, as well as for our little friend, heard his words, and turned round into the room, saying, "This is something that concerns you, Colonel. Who is your little friend?"

"Ha! ha!" shouted a voice in the crowd. "The little chap is no spy after all; only a pimp: ask him the colour of her stockings?"

"Leave him alone, men," said the serjeant; "his skin is safe for this bout: better luck next time."

Juan arose from his seat and went to the window; but, although the moonlight fell on the form of the arriero, he could scarcely recognise in the blood-stained, battered, and dust-covered figure, who stood there without his hat, and with his long hair streaming wildly over his face, his faithful little friend

and guide, the jaunty, spruce, merry muleteer. Pepe, however, uttered a scream of joy, but recovering himself quickly, he made Juan a low bow, and said, in a voice only loud enough for him to hear, "O, Señor! Your Excellency must come immediately; the Señorita"—

Juan did not wait to hear another word; but, springing from the window, to the utter astonishment of the soldiers, who fell back on every side, he caught Pepito up in his arms as if he had been a child, and rushed with him into the posada.

The soldiers dispersed, and the body of the charcoal-burner was thrown on a muck-heap—fitting grave for such a monster.

His appearance at San Roque may be accounted for in a few words.

Frascita, as may be remembered, had regained her senses before Mateo quitted the hut on the black horse, and accompanied by Manolo. He had gone to his mill to get the house ready, and to warn the old padre at the convent of the approaching wedding, which he intended should take place immediately. On his way, it occurred to him that Frascita would perhaps recognise her uncle's murderer; and that he did not wish should be the case until after they were married, and then he did not care. He therefore sent Manolo away to San Roque, with his sash heavy with dollars (for Mateo was liberal enough to those who served him), to pick up what news he could, and ascertain the reality of the capture of the Felicidad, and the consequent death of his hated rival, the young Carlist.

Manolo readily complied, for he was partial to aguardiente, and tired of the stupid life in the Moraima.

But in so doing the miller lost his right hand, and the charcoal-burner his life.

It would be but repeating what my readers already know, if I were to relate the conversation that passed between Juan and the arriero.

The gipsy's tale, the death of Lope, his own intended murder, the wretched situation of his mistress, half dead, and in the power of the miller; Pepe's encounter with the murdering charcoal-burner, and the narrow escape the poor little fellow himself had from being torn to pieces—all these filled the young

Carlist's mind with an indescribable feeling of horror and dismay, mingled with a burning, torturing thirst for revenge.

He attributed all these dreadful scenes to the unnatural warfare now raging in the country, creating a thirst for blood, and rendering such deeds familiar to the minds of men, and by its consequent anarchy leaving them unpunished, except by as fearful a retaliation.

That retaliation had already commenced; it must be persevered in, or how could his darling mistress be rescued?

The miller must die.

Pepe, well taken care of, soon recovered the equanimity of his disposition. He had lost nothing but his hat, and that was easily replaced; the cut on his face he had promised himself to repay on the first opportunity. He had had revenge, and he was satisfied; at least, it quieted his mind.

He advised our hero, as it was now very late, to wait until the morning dawned, and then to join the gipsy at the appointed time and place.

Juan reluctantly assented; for, although impatient to set out to rescue his dear mistress, he felt that he could not but trust his faithful, devoted little guide, who had already brought him so well through so many dangers and difficulties.

But Juan slept little that night.

Early on the following morning, a small party of cavalry, dressed in blue jackets and red caps, and tolerably well armed and mounted, might have been seen slowly wending their way in single file along the steep, narrow, stony road which leads from the little town of San Roque into the wild Moraima, and at their head rode Juan and the arriero.

CHAPTER X.

The old Crone and the disconsolate Maiden—The Gipsy again!—The Knife—The Wish gratified.

MARIQUITA was, in truth, of gipsy origin, and her tale was altogether false; but she sought to gain pity and gold from the maiden by her woful story. Mateo, moreover, had instructed her carefully in the part she was to play. She was to keep watch over the maiden, and to hint cleverly what was to come, and to prepare Frascita for it by informing her gently of the death of the young Carlist, which he thought might, perhaps, reconcile her to her fate. He dared not trust himself to do it, for fear he should, too soon for his purposes, arouse suspicion in the maiden's breast.

Frascita did, in truth, feel deeply interested in the old woman's story, for there were many points in it that closely resembled her own fate; and no wonder, for Mariquita had cunningly devised her tale so as to draw the maiden on to ask more questions.

"Ay de mi; what a sad fate was yours, poor woman!" said Frascita with tears in her eyes; "but mine, too, is sad. Pity me, dear mother, pity me; for I, too, love!—and, alas! alas! I fear I shall never, never see him again."

"And do you not love the bold miller?" cried the hag, as if in amazement.

"Ah, no, no, mother; the man I love is gentle, and good, and noble."

"Ay, but where is he? Why does he not come?"

"Alas, mother! I know not; would to God I did! They seek his life to slay him, for they say he is a traitor to his country, a rebel to his queen; but to me he is the breath of life. Oh, Mother of Heaven! why are there any Carlists? Why do they kill each other?"

"Hush!" cried the old woman, as if relapsing into her half mad mood:—

"The glowing seas are deep
That wash the Eastern shore,
And mangled bodies sleep
Where they shall wake no more;
The boat is swift and fast
That skims those smooth seas over,
The boat is ta'en at last
That bears the maiden's lover."

"Oh! they have taken him," cried Frascita, clasping her hands together in agony, as the picture drawn by the hag was realised in her mind; "and they will murder him."

"Hush! interrupt me not," said the beldame imperiously:—

"The volley rattles loud,
The deadly bullets come,
The white sand for a shroud,
The billow for a tomb;
A cry upon the air,
A splashing on the wave,
Oh, tell me why is there
A corpse, and not a grave?
The wave rolls back again,
A rebel corpse to cover,
The maiden seeks in vain
The body of her lover."

As Frascita, excited and horrified at the beldame's rhymes, rose up on the bed to entreat her to be more explicit, and tell her the whole truth, she saw through the casement the form of a tall, gaunt, swarthy man looking into the room, with a half suspicious, half satisfied air: his finger on his lips enjoined silence.

Frascita, with admirable presence of mind, suppressed the exclamation she was about to utter; but she could not prevent her eyes from remaining fixed on the countenance of the man who stood there.

"What see you there, my aloe-flower?" said the old hag, her suspicions aroused by the maiden's involuntary start, and the expression of her countenance.

"Oh, mother!" said the maiden, wildly, "I thought I saw *him*—but oh, it must have been fancy only."

"Whom mean you?" replied the beldame, with an ill-disguised sneer: "was it your lover?"

"Ay de mi!" murmured the maiden: "mother! you have

been playing with me; and he is alive, or how could he be here?"

Frascita's manner was so natural, that it completely deceived Mariquita.

"Ha! is it so?" muttered the crone, shaking her head, but with her teeth chattering in spite of herself, for she really believed Juan to be dead: "it must be his ghost, or perhaps the girl's senses are wandering again; let us see, let us see;" and she hobbled out of the room.

Before she could get to the door, the form of the man had vanished.

This incident, trifling as it may seem, kindled instantaneously new hopes in Frascita's breast; she was now evidently not completely deserted. She had seen this man's face before; yes, she was so sure of that.

Presently she began to recollect his features.

It was he who had interposed, though vainly, to save her uncle from the knives of his assassins.

This was enough, under the circumstances, to inspire even confidence in the maiden's breast; hope was there already in full force, and she no longer believed the beldame's tale: everybody was deceiving her; she, too, must dissemble.

"Your songs," said Frascita to the old woman, as she returned, "are so beautiful, so wild, so strange, that I suppose they set my senses wandering again. Alas, alas! and is it true that he —the brave, the beautiful, is dead?"

"Have I not told you so already?" said the crone, sharply, and in a tone and with a manner quite different from that she had as yet used.

"Be not angry with my folly, dear mother," said Frascita, in a deprecating manner; "but come, and sing me to sleep with your pretty songs, for, in truth, I am weary, and sick at heart."

The old woman, again apparently resuming her insane manner, complied, and commenced singing, in her strange, monotonous voice, pieces of quaint old songs.

The maiden was soon, to all appearance, buried in a profound slumber.

But she knew that Mariquita passed her skinny hands once or twice over her eyes, and listened attentively to her breathing:

and then she went out of the room singing and muttering to herself.

No sooner had she gone out than the maiden, creeping gently along the bed, stood at the open casement.

"Hist, Señora," said the gipsy, emerging from the stable and speaking in a whisper into Frascita's ear as she stooped to listen; "Hist, I heard all: don't believe a word she says—it is all a lie: he is alive and well!"

"And who are you, that you should take an interest in my fate?"

"Never mind who I am," replied the gipsy sulkily; "that is neither here nor there: but mind, don't be afraid of them, and ride the black horse to-morrow."

"I will, I will," replied the maiden; "but do tell me who sent you, who told you of my being here, and of our leaving this place to-morrow."

"I can tell you no more, my pretty mistress, than that there are others besides the miller—curses on him!—who care for that lovely face of yours. Now don't blush and look angry; but mind and ride the black horse to-morrow, don't forget that."

Frascita was about to question him further, but the gipsy stopped her, saying merely, "Get to bed again, get to bed again, quick, quick." And then he glided away with noiseless steps, murmuring as he went "The horse, the horse!"

His quick ear had detected the steps of the old woman as she moved from the other room.

Frascita took the hint, and before the beldame had opened the door she was apparently fast asleep in the same posture as when Mariquita had gone out.

The old woman again quietly seated herself on the low stool by the bedside, and Frascita could hear her muttering, "There is nobody—the girl's senses must be straying—it is natural enough—yet I wish he would come back, I wish he would come back—I don't like this—can the dead come back again?—I hope not, I hope not!" and the hag visibly shuddered.

Presently she pulled out from some part of her dress a long sharp-pointed knife, and held it up to her eyes. "The spot is there, the spot is still there—it won't come out, it won't come out!"

Frascita, unwilling to hear more of these horrors, which she felt were real, made a movement as if suddenly awakened.

The old woman started, and hurriedly replaced, as she thought, the knife in her dress; but in doing so it slipped from her trembling hands, and catching in the coverlet of the bed, fell noiselessly on the floor.

Frascita's quick eye perceived this, and as swift as the lightning's flash a burning wish to possess the weapon crossed her mind.

Mariquita, seeing that the maiden was awake, recommenced her singing, and mindful of the miller's injunctions, framed her words so as to bear upon the future fate of the intended victim:—

"From the forest glade
And the cork-tree shade
No more the wild dove roams,
But he plucks his breast
To build a soft nest
For his mate when the springtide comes.

The white sheets are spread,
Hung with garlands the bed,
With roses her blushes to hide,
The priest he is by,
And the powder is dry,
To welcome the brave man's bride."

"Mother," said the maiden in a soft voice, "can you read dreams?—you seem to know everything—tell me what this means—oh, it was strange and beautiful."

"Can the old Mariquita read dreams?" replied the beldame, repeating Frascita's words; "yes, my beautiful one, yes; it is her business—say on."

"Ah, mother! I thought the bells were ringing merrily, and guns were firing in the still air; the path before me was strewn with myrtles and wild roses; at the end of it was a beautiful church, and at the porch a priest in his vestments beckoned to me with his finger. A handsome young man was riding by my side, and he spoke softly to me; but as we two rode on, the church receded from us. Still we went on and on, over mountain and through valley, over torrent and through wood—still we could not reach the church. At length we came to an

orange-grove. Suddenly I thought to myself, 'This is what prevents us—we have no orange-flowers; let us gather some;' but I found that I could not speak, for my throat was parched and my tongue immovable. My lover perceived my distress, but he knew not what I wanted and I could not tell him, and in this agony I awoke."

"The girl is certainly gone mad," muttered the crone, "but I might as well gratify her caprice."

This was exactly what the maiden wished.

"Ay," said Mariquita, speaking aloud, "the scent of the orange-blossoms has stolen into the room on the wings of the perfumed air, and the fevered brain of the lovely one wishes for some of the flowers to inhale their dewy fragrance:—that is all, my pretty one."

"Is that your reading, mother?" said Frascita pettishly: "it is dull enough."

"Hush, hush, my darling, don't be angry; I will go and get you some blossoms," said Mariquita, as if soothing a fractious child.

And she went out of the room.

Frascita stooped from the bed and raised the knife: she looked at it for one moment with a bitter smile, and placed it carefully beneath her pillow.

Strange bedfellow for one so young and so lovely!

Mariquita soon returned with a handful of orange-blossoms, which threw a delicious fragrance over the little room; but Frascita did not now seem to care for them, but said, rather petulantly, that she would try and sleep again. The old hag sat down as before by the bedside, but without saying a word, and she soon fell fast asleep.

Frascita closed her eyes and thought deeply, for indeed she had much to reflect upon. In the first place, were this man's words true, or was he only a tool in the miller's hands, a partner in the deception that was being practised upon her? Why did he say no more, if he really had come there to watch over her safety and assist her in escaping? She would have given worlds for a few minutes' more conversation with him, but that seemed impossible. She pondered on his words, and repeated to herself a hundred times, "It is all a lie—he is safe and well." Who

could this be but Juan, her deeply loved Juan? But what did the man mean by bidding her be sure and ride the black horse on the morrow: the black horse—that must surely be the one her uncle was riding when he was murdered? And she had seen it again; yes, that was the horse that was mounted by Mateo in front of the window—she remembered now her uncle having said that it belonged to her young Carlist; but how was it essential to her escape? Poor girl! she little knew then that had it not been for Bavieca she would have, perhaps for ever, lost all chance of escaping from the miller's clutches.

What if Mateo should not bring the horse back when he himself returned, for return no doubt he soon would; but where had he gone and what was his errand? Oh, how she dreaded the moment when she should hear the tramp of the horses!—how should she act? The man had told her not to be afraid of them; but could she conceal her horror if her uncle's murderer appeared in her presence?—that, she felt, would be impossible—the actual contact of a ferocious wild beast would be less terrible: yet a symptom of fear or distrust might spoil all.

Ever since the world began, women, especially when they are young and in love, have always had more self-possession at their command than men. They can dissemble and hide their feelings with much greater readiness and facility, and in this emergency our heroine proved herself a true woman. She resolved to feign an appearance of contentment with her fate, to receive Mateo kindly, and to betray no suspicion of his motives; to await the event with hope, if not with confidence, and in this she was supported by the belief that her Juan was alive and would not desert her; and come what come may, to ride the black horse on the morrow if he returned, and above all not to part with her friendly weapon. She thought again and again of Juan, and his form rising before her excited senses confirmed her in her resolution. Sooner than wed Mateo she would die, a thousand times die. Then she thought how had her young hero escaped from the toils of his enemies: that he had done so she doubted not, but the how was still a mystery.

At length, wearied with thinking, and still weak from the dreadful shock her nerves had received, the maiden sunk into a gentle slumber.

CHAPTER XI.

Night in the Moraima—The Miller returns—The Black Horse—The Hut is quitted; for What?—The Rescue—The Lovers meet once more.

FRASCITA slept long and soundly, and when she awoke felt hopeful and refreshed.

It was night, calm, tranquil, beautiful night. The room was dark; but she felt that she was alone, and all was silent in the hut. The fragrance of the orange-blossoms refreshed by the cooling dew stole on the wings of the soft night-breeze through the open casement. The glistening fire-flies glimmered in myriads before the window, now disappearing in the gloom, now shining like little stars amidst the dark foliage of the tangled thicket. The leaves of the forest-trees sighed and murmured gently as the slender branches waved softly to and fro: there was a sound of water too, where the little brook babbled over a tiny fall. And then the hoarse booming of the bull-frogs concealed in the alder-swamp would come with a melancholy, mournful sound, chiding the stillness of that lovely night; or an owl would hoot from some grim old cork-tree, or a fox would utter his sharp, short bark, or a night-hawk give a feeble cry.

Oh, where is night so lovely as "midst the forest wild?" Once or twice the maiden fancied she could distinguish the sound of footsteps falling lightly on the soft turf. And it seemed to her as if a shadowy, unsubstantial form flitted several times before the open casement, and whispered softly as it glided by, "The horse, the horse!"

But whether it was real or only fancy the maiden never knew.

The night is fast waning, and the morning that is to decide her fate is about to dawn. Doubt not that Frascita's heart beat strangely as hope and fear alternated in her breast. She felt under the pillow for her last refuge—it was gone: what did that portend?

Now she remembered that in her dreams she had been lifted gently up and carried to her own sweet mountain-home.

Mariquita must have removed it, then.

The swallows are twittering round the lonely hut, the bee-birds' distant cry is heard in the air—anon they come with brilliant plumage, streaming like meteors through the sky, to revisit their favourite aloe-spikes, for they know that the cups are already replenished with honeyed sweets.

Long shadows fall from the lofty alders upon the smooth turf, even to the hut; and dotted here and there, a few, faint, roseate, blushing streaks appear through the clustering foliage. At length Mariquita entered, bearing a large pitcher of cold spring water.

She laid it down, and motioned to Frascita to arise, but left the room without speaking. Her whole nature seemed suddenly changed, and she no longer had flowers in her hair.

The maiden arose, and refreshed by the coolness of the limpid, sparkling water, began to arrange the long lustrous masses of hair which fell in disordered folds almost to the ground, and half concealed and half revealed, as if in modest coquetry, the symmetry of her ivory neck and the snowy whiteness of her budding bosom. Where the roseate light of morning, which now shone through the open window, streamed upon the waving tresses, each hair appeared as a thread of gold; but where the shadows fell, her little white hands seemed to stray through silken masses, black and glossy as the raven's wing. Her naked feet peeped out, small and delicate as a child's.

Light and life again beamed in those sparkling eyes; and her downy cheeks caught a reflection from the blush of morning. Who could look upon such a figure unmoved?

Whilst the graceful maiden stood there arranging her beautiful hair, forming a picture that Guido might have drawn from, Mariquita again hobbled into the room, bearing in her hand a cup of fragrant chocolate. As she presented it to Frascita, she looked at her with a strange expression, in which pity and admiration were curiously blended with habitual cunning and deceit, and she muttered, in a low but audible voice, "It is too late, it is too late."

"What is too late, mother?" asked Frascita, in a gentle voice.

The hag did not reply for a few moments; but again drawing

forth the knife, and again gazing at it with wildness in her looks for more than a minute, she said, as if thinking aloud, "And has one so young, so beautiful, the courage to use this? And would she sooner die than wed one she hates? Ah, maiden, maiden! had I known this before, the old Mariquita might and would have saved you from such a fate: but it is too late now—it is too late now."

"Am I not an Andalucian maiden?" replied Frascita, proudly: "and thinkest thou that force should obtain what the spirit wills not? No, no, mother; it is impossible: I would sooner, sooner die!"

"There was a time," said the hag, musingly, "when I thought as she does." Then, with startling energy, she cried, "Look, maiden, look at that dull spot!—that is not my blood, but the blood of him I hated!"

And Mariquita held up the knife before Frascita's eyes.

"Take it, girl, take it;—death is better than misery—misery such as I have endured for years—long, bitter, tearless years: but had I courage such as yours, this, this would not have been."

Suddenly the hag assumed a listening attitude.

"Hark! they come, they come—thy trial, maiden, is at hand! Take it, and if thy heart fails thee in that hour of trial—like mine—like mine—give it back to the old Mariquita."

With trembling but eager hands the maiden took the knife and concealed it in her dress. Mariquita said no more; but commenced as before muttering to herself, and singing broken snatches of songs.

The maiden was by this time dressed; and determined to show that she did not distrust the miller or suspect his motives, she went to the door of the hut to receive him.

The glowing rays of the sun now glancing through the topmost branches of the alders dazzled her eyes; but still she could see that a man darted out of the stable, with a gun in his hand, and rushed across the glade into the tangled thicket.

Presently she heard amidst the forest-trees the voices of men, the jingling of little bells, and the low sound of horses' feet on the soft turf. A party of horsemen appeared descending from the hill-side into the open glade; and Frascita could distinguish even at a considerable distance the tall, stalwarth figure of the miller riding the gallant black horse.

Joyful sight for the maiden—the horse had returned! Still she looked anxiously and nervously for the dreaded and blood-thirsty murderer of her uncle; but he was not there. And instead there rode behind the miller four men, well mounted and armed; and one of them led a mule gaily caparisoned, and with a woman's saddle on his back.

The miller dismounted, leaving Bavieca loose, and saluted Frascita courteously, complimenting her on her beauty and recovered health; and inquired, even tenderly, if she was well enough to bear the fatigue of a journey.

The maiden in her turn received Mateo with smiles; but not for one moment did she forget the mysterious injunction of the swarthy stranger. She patted Bavieca on his arched neck as he stood quietly by; and the noble horse seemed to return her caresses by licking her hand like a dog, as if he knew her, as she said, in reply to the miller's question, "Oh, yes, Mateo, I am quite well; but I should like to ride that pretty, graceful animal. Where did you get him?"

The miller started, and looked suspiciously at Frascita; but quickly recovered his presence of mind as she added, "I don't know him, though the poor fellow seems to know me. Do let me ride him, Mateo—he appears so easy and so gentle."

There was nothing unnatural in this, after all; it seemed only a pretty woman's caprice: and so Mateo thought, and he resolved to gratify it; for he was in a high good humour at Frascita appearing to receive him at the door with smiles on her lovely countenance. How could he suspect that she had a motive for doing this?

Did the maiden's conscience smite her at this untruth? If it did, she showed no signs of it then, but appeared cheerful, and even gay.

The miller and the maiden entered the hut, while Bavieca quietly trotted off to the stable; and an hour passed away—an hour of pleasing anticipation to Mateo, but a dreadful one of trembling anxiety and uncertainty to Frascita.

Yet she hoped on, though vaguely and indefinitely. The sun shone out brightly and serenely, illuminating the wild forest scenery; and the rays fell on the hill clothed with golden broom.

Then the miller arose, and excusing himself by saying that he must go out and see the saddles changed and the horses got ready, left the room; but it was in truth to hear old Mariquita's report of what had passed during his absence.

But the old woman replied briefly and sulkily, that she had nothing to tell.

Mateo, accustomed to her strange, uncertain manner, thought nothing of this; but putting some money into her hand, which she held out for the purpose, entered the stable.

The hag clutched the coin eagerly in her skinny fingers, as if she loved its very touch. But when the miller had turned away, so that her movements could not be seen, she threw it from her into the brushwood, muttering, "I cannot take it; 't is the price of blood, 't is the price of blood."

The sun is behind the hill; the horses are at the door ready for the road; the mule is left in the stable, and his saddle is transferred to the broad back of the matchless Bavieca; the miller stands by him, holding in his hand a long leading-rein of platted cord, which is fastened to the headstall of the black horse.

Three of the four smugglers are already mounted; the fourth is on foot: they have all their escopetas ready unslung, as if prepared against some sudden attack.

The maiden is ready; she has sought for the old Mariquita, but in vain—she is not to be found.

Mateo assists her to mount, his frame thrilling at the touch; and seeing her look with surprise at the armed escort, reassures her by saying that it is only a precaution against straggling parties of Carlists; and taking the leading-rein in his hand, gets on his horse, and they ride away at a footpace.

Scarcely had they disappeared amidst the broken hills, when a man, gliding from the thicket, entered the stable, and saddling the mule, led him out, and rode off in the same direction, following their track through the brushwood.

Beautiful Almoraima! many and many a pleasant hour have I spent amidst thy grim old cork-trees.

I loved thee at all times, and at all seasons. Beautiful wert thou, when the startled roe-deer, bounding from the ferny brake where he had made his lair, gazed around with head erect and brilliant eye, as if uncertain whither he should fly; then, as he

heard the opening cry of the busy pack—away, away—over brushwood—through brake—down headlong ravine—over rugged watercourse—through tangled swamp—away he nimbly fled; whilst, dashing after him in wild pursuit, the eager chiding of the hounds and the cheering cry of the huntsman echoed merrily through thy wilderness of wood.

Beautiful wert thou, when the fierce, scorching sun glared intensely on the exposed sierra! how cool, how refreshing was thy deep, soft, mellow shade!

Gay flowers clothed the hill sides with a dyed garment of loveliness; the wild vine, festooned in many a graceful fold, curled and twisted around and amidst the lofty forest-trees; then the smooth turf, dotted here and there with a densely foliaged bella sombra, and moist with trickling rills, invited a gallop; and yon sloping bank, o'ershadowed by that quaintly branching cork-tree, promised a cool reposing-place.

Yes, many and many a time have I, undeterred by robber tales, alone and unarmed, gone to thee, to enjoy thy greenness, thy solitude, thy silent beauty; and, tying my horse to some charred or broken stump, laid myself down beneath some dark-foliaged ilex amidst the flowering cistus-bushes, and—shall I say it?—smoked my fragrant cigar.

Thou wert my love, my beauty, then; and still, memory is grateful unto thee.

Slowly through the shady Moraima rode the miller and the maiden.

Had the sylvan beauty of the scene any charm for them? Alas! no.

Mateo was familiar to it; and at that moment Frascita was all in all to him; he saw but her alone. And the maiden's thoughts were wandering after her lost love; or, perhaps, she was divining what was to come.

They had reached a spot where the road—which was still covered with soft, short turf—became so narrow that only two could with difficulty ride abreast.

On one side the hills rose nearly abruptly from the path, intersected here and there by a rocky ravine.

On the other lay stretched, for several miles, one of those densely-wooded, tangled, treacherous swamps not unfrequent

in the Moraima, impracticable to horses, but a refuge for the hunted deer.

Suddenly the black horse pricked up his pointed ears, and neighed shrilly.

Along the path, as if from an echo, the horse was answered.

The miller quickly checked both the horses—for he still held the leading-rein, and standing up in his stirrups, gazed eagerly down the path; soon his keen eye detected the glancing of arms amidst the distant cistus-bushes; the smugglers in the rear closed up at this pause.

The horsemen in front now dashed from their hiding-place, and appearing in the path, their red caps became suddenly visible.

"The Carlists! the Carlists!" cried the miller's followers, in terror, as they turned their horses round, and, spurring them into a gallop, fled over the smooth sward.

As they in their turn appeared to the gipsy, he sprang from his mule and darted into the thick cover of fern and underwood by the road side.

For one moment only was the miller irresolute. He turned the horses round, and clasping the long leading-rein of the startled Bavieca firmly in one hand, forced both into a gallop.

"Frascita! Frascita!" shouted a well-known voice, "I come, I come."

The maiden strove to check her horse, pulling with all her little strength at the reins, but in vain; for, excited by the shouts, the noise of horses galloping behind him, and seeing others in his front, Bavieca dashed wildly on, stretching himself out as if it was a race.

Still, the sharp bit checked his speed, and the cord was tightened.

"Faster, faster—let his head go," cried the miller, fiercely, and tugging savagely at the leading-rein as Bavieca fell rather behind. Still they gained a little on their pursuers, and Frascita saw it.

What is so quick as thought?

In a moment, a happy moment, the maiden remembered the knife, the old woman's parting gift: the stake was for life and Juan. With reckless courage she dropped the reins on the horse's neck, and drawing the knife from its concealment in her bosom,

she stooped forwards, and with a quick stroke of its sharp edge severed the leading-rein; then as quickly dropping it, and recovering the reins, with both her hands and all her force she strove to arrest her horse's headlong flight, as she screamed frantically, "Juan, Juan!"

The miller wheeled suddenly round; but as he did so Bavieca stopped as suddenly, and fretting at the sharp bit, began to plunge and rear violently.

"Let his head go, girl; he will kill you," again shouted the miller, more fiercely than before.

"I care not," said Frascita, resolutely; "Mateo, I will not fly."

"Then die," cried the miller, in a hoarse, unnatural voice. "He shall not have thee;" and drawing a pistol from his sash, he stood up in his stirrups and took a deliberate aim at the shrieking maiden.

Juan saw the action, and he too shrieked till the woods rang again.

"Juan, Juan, save me!" screamed Frascita, wildly.

There came a flash, a smoke from the pistol, and then a double report echoed along the tangled swamp. The miller's arm dropped broken and helpless by his side; and the bullet from his pistol found a harmless resting-place in the soft turf.

Half-stunned by the shock, and wholly unconscious of what he was doing, Mateo darted his sharp spurs into his horse's flank, and wheeling him suddenly round, galloped madly away.

Where still the blue smoke hung in wreaths over the fern, and amongst the leaves of the cistus-bushes, the gipsy's eyes gleamed triumphantly as he passed.

Terrified by the flash, the smoke, and the double report, Bavieca again reared madly up, pawing the air with his fore-feet; and the maiden, exhausted by her efforts, and fainting with fear, slipped gently off from the saddle on to the soft turf.

No sooner had she fallen than Bavieca, as if conscious of what he had done, stood still, trembling in every limb; and stretching out his long neck, began to lick her hands.

Then whilst Juan, flinging himself from his horse, was raising the inanimate form of his mistress, the gipsy with a wild cry sprang on Bavieca, and urged him up the steep hill;—but it was

all too late, for the soldiers, who had but imperfectly seen in the narrow track what had taken place, throwing themselves from their horses, poured a straggling volley after the flying Gitano. A bullet struck him on the head, and with one fearful, heart-rending scream, he fell, and his body disappeared amidst the closely matted brushwood.

Juan raised the maiden's drooping head, and frantically kissed those dewy lips. Suddenly, with a thrilling cry of joy, he shouted, "She breathes, she breathes!—water, water!"

Pepe, rushing into the swamp, returned in a moment with his hat full of water, and sprinkled it gently over the maiden's face. With eager and trembling anxiety Juan watched the effect.

Presently a faint blush flickered beneath the transparent skin of those pallid cheeks; a low gasping sigh stole through her half-closed lips.

Then once more, like the first bright sun-ray after the awful hurricane, a soft beam shone out from beneath those silken lashes, and the maiden softly murmured out, "Juan, my beloved Juan, is it indeed thou?"

Thus these two met again.

UPB

CHAPTER XII.

Conclusion; containing principally a few remarks on what has gone before.

With this scene ended my little guide's tale. Anxious to learn the subsequent fate of the handsome Carlist and the fair Frascita, for I felt deeply interested in them, I inquired if he knew what became of them afterwards. Pepe replied:

"I do not know for certain, Señor. The Carlists quitted San Roque in a day or two, and I left about the same time on business of my own. Some say that Colonel Juan was killed by a cannon-shot from one of your vessels whilst he was passing along the sand-hills by the Guadaranque; but I for my part do not believe it, for the officer who was thus killed rode a white horse, and I know myself that the Colonel was mounted on the gallant Bavieca. Besides, some months after the death of the Señor Lope (and here my little guide crossed himself and muttered some words of prayer), I was in our great city, Madrid, and one day, when I was drinking wine in a house close by the Puerta del Sol, I overheard some contrabandistas from the north discussing the beauty of a Carlist chief, a lady, and a black horse, whom it seems they had guided through the passes of the mountains into France. One said the man was the handsomest, some the Señorita, and others were lost in admiration of the splendid jet-black steed. So you see, Señor, it must have been they."

"Without doubt," said I; "and you are Pepito, the arriero of Cordova?"

"Preciso," replied he, grinning.

"And the wooden cross by the aloe-flower was to mark where the gallant Lope fell, and that was the stain of his blood on the road?"

Pepe evidently did not relish these questions, but he replied in the affirmative. Then turning his head away, perhaps to hide

a tear shed for his dear master's death (though Spaniards are not much given to weeping), he remained silent and uncommunicative for some time afterwards.

This little tale, not written for publication, but for my own amusement, to pass away the tedious hours of the long dreary winter nights in North America, is intended to depict the utter lawlessness and consequent misery of a naturally beautiful and gay country, such as Andalucia, under the bloodstained horrors of an unnatural civil war, and the poor control of a wretched, pusillanimous government (if indeed it can be so called). Crime produces crime, bloodshed familiarises men to murder, until man's life becomes of no more value than the reptile's which is crushed beneath the feet. And such was Spain then: and is it better now?

The reality is in many cases worse than fiction; and who, conversant with that unhappy country, can say that the picture I have attempted to delineate is too highly coloured?

It must not be supposed that this is altogether a work of fiction. Most of the characters, scenes, and incidents, happened either whilst I was at Gibraltar, or came under my personal experience whilst travelling in the southern part of Andalucia; and the descriptions are taken from nature. There is one anachronism which it might be as well to mention, namely, that of the great fair of Ronda being held in the autumn instead of the spring; but it was necessary for the conduct of the story, as the descent of Gomez into Andalucia is historical.

Some of my readers may perhaps recognise in Lope de la Vega the well-known contrabandista Frascito Martinez, of Ximeneh. I can see him now, splendidly dressed in the Majo costume, the best-looking, the proudest, the very personification of the haughty Spaniard, crossing with measured steps the crowded bull-ring of that singular and romantic city of the sierras, the indescribable yet lovely Ronda.

The miller of the Moraima is well known to those who at that time followed the Calpe fox-hounds into the recesses of that glorious forest. To the officers of the garrison of Gibraltar I

believe he was uniformly civil, but there is no doubt that he had killed with his own hand many individuals—it was then supposed to the number of seven—and one under very singular circumstances, namely, the one alluded to in the story by Pepe the Arriero. This ferocious man's mill was burned by the Carlists in the autumn of 1836, and I believe his only child perished in the flames. The scene in the venta near the mouth of the Guadiara is taken from what I saw there whilst on a sporting excursion from Gibraltar, for the sake of the shooting and the fly-fishing, both of which were capital in their way.

The chase and the escape of the smuggling craft, nearly as I have related, actually occurred; and as I was an eye-witness of it, and the manner in which it was effected, I can vouch for the fact, although it may seem improbable and exaggerated to my nautical friends. The scene, I remember, was heightened by a splendid thunderstorm bursting over the Sierra Vermeja.

The little Pepita and the old Carlist are no creations of my pen.

This damsel, pretty and graceful as a fawn, came dancing up to me in one of the courts of the Alhambra to present me with a nosegay of fresh-gathered flowers with the dew still hanging about their petals.

The old man I encountered in that most detestable even of Spanish inns, the Fonda de la Diligencia at Cordova, whilst I was waiting for a conveyance to take me on to Seville, two diligences having been just burned by the Carlinos on the Madrid road: if I mistake not, Borrow mentions the same old man.

The Moraima or Almoraima, so often mentioned in the tale, is a vast and extremely wild and picturesque district of forest which extends from the Guadiara to the Guadaranque, about fifteen miles from east to west, and nearly ten from south to north, from a few miles behind San Roque to Castellar.

This district is well worthy the attention of the botanist and the natural historian, for it abounds with a wonderful variety of beautiful plants, shrubs, flowers, and animals.

The principal timber-trees contained in this vast forest are

the different kinds of the robur and the ilex, the most common being the sweet-acorn oak (quercus ballota), and the cork-tree (quercus suber); besides these, the ilex (quercus ilex), the true British oak (quercus pedunculata), and the beech-oak (quercus faginea), are sometimes met with; but the two first form the leading and prominent feature of the landscape.

In the swamps, or sotos, the common alder (alnus glutinosa), the black alder (rhamnus frangula), from which the best charcoal is made, the weeping birch (betula pendula), the white poplar (populus alba), thrive in the moist black soil, often festooned with wild vines and other parasitical plants.

In the open glades are found the olive, the thorn, the bella sombra, the chesnut, the orange-tree, and the fig, besides an infinity of others too numerous and varied for any but a botanist to describe.

Along the little rills which trickle through the soft turf grow the pink-flowering oleander and the rhododendron, to which resort at certain seasons of the year multitudes of small birds. The denizens of this lovely district are varied and numerous—wild boars, wolves, foxes, roe-deer, hares, rabbits, badgers, hedgehogs, racoons, and, I believe, porcupines, are to be met with: red-legged partridges, woodcocks, wild pigeons, and doves abound. The bee-bird (merops apiaster) flits round the flowering shrubs with its singular flight and strange cry, devouring the bees and sucking the honey like the humming-bird, a species of which I have often met with, but of duller colours than many of its tropical brethren. Another lovely bird, the hoopoe (upupa epops), is not uncommon; and the nightjar (caprimulgus) glides on noiseless wings along the dark rocky ravines, uttering its harsh and singular noise. Eagles and hawks vary the scene; and overhead a string of huge, gaunt vultures are wending their way through the trackless sky towards Africa. Near the entrance into the forest, where the river Guadaranque flows through a grassy level flat, where grow multitudes of lilies, I have sometimes seen the scarlet and white flamingo, and that most elegant of all birds, the snow-white egret.

Half wild, fierce-looking cattle rush out on the unwary tra-

veller from the shade of some densely foliaged thicket, and vast herds of black pigs revel in luxuriance beneath sweet acorned oaks, and the deep note of the herdsman's cowhorn echoes through the forest. Altogether there is a surpassing charm in this beautiful sylvan district.

The underwood, which in many parts is very dense, is principally composed of fern, broom, furze, wild myrtle, and various kinds of cistus, mingled with wild roses and an infinity of other flowering shrubs.

The hill sides and the open grassy glades are adorned with a profusion of wild flowers of fragrant smell and brilliant hues.

The scenery is wild and yet park-like, and ever varying. Every now and then the horseman comes upon a rocky, impracticable ravine, or a densely wooded and impenetrable swamp. These sotos are always a sure find for the Calpe fox-hounds, and many a brilliant woodland run have I seen from them.

A mystery has always hung over Gomez after his retreat from San Roque. I well remember the reports that were in circulation at Gibraltar concerning him. Some said that he was betrayed by his own party, who were jealous of his talents; others, that he himself was the traitor, and had been bought with Christino gold. Then came an account of his having been tried by a court-martial and shot: after that he certainly did disappear from Spain; at all events, he never afterwards played a prominent part. This really talented general is, I believe, at this moment a détenu, if not actually a prisoner, in the south of France,—I believe, at Bayonne.

The Arab custom of firing off guns at a wedding is still kept up in Andalucia. I remember seeing a bridal party near Gaucin where the men were blazing away their powder in fine style. I had intended to have followed my little intelligent guide over the wild Sierras to other scenes. But, alas! the leviathan Ford has swept over all that country with his giant pen, and left no crumbs behind for a hungry writer to pick up; and so, as I was answered by mine host when arriving tired, hungry, and thirsty at La Nueva Venta (near Louisiana), "No hay nada, ni pan, ni sal, ni vino, ni agua." One egg there was, but what was that among four ravenous wayfarers? Columbus him-

self, with his experience of eggs, could not have settled the question of the partition of this one.

From Spain to where Columbus went is a natural transition, and there, if this little work should please the public, I intend to proceed with my pen, as I did with my person.

THE END.

London: Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS, Stamford Street.

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